FASHION STATEMENT Negtipunan Mayor Rosario Corona attends the Sona in G-string, headband and bare feet. (STORY, A11)

LIFESTYLE / C1
Replenish your body, feed cells with the raw food diet

BUSINESS / B1
Peso touches 43.95 to dollar on easing oil prices

NEWS / A2
Something fishy in GSIS-Meralco case, says justice

Mayor in G-string steals show from the fashionistas

By Alex Y. Vergara and Norman Bordadora

A TOWN MAYOR IN G-STRING STYLE the show from the fashionistas who walked the red carpet in designer barong and gowns yesterday at the State of the Nation Address (Sona).

Negtipunan Mayor Rosario Corona, "overall chief" of the Bugkalot tribe in Central Luzon, came in a blue G-string, red headband and bare feet.

MAYOR, A11

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, July 29, 2008 ★ 7 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 214 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

GMA stands pat on VAT

Says tax will enable RP to weather global crisis

By Christine O. Avendaño, Michael Lim Ubac and Norman Bordadora

AS THOUSANDS OF protesters burned her in effigy, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday spurned calls for the scrapping of the hugely unpopular value-added tax (VAT) on oil, declaring there was no turning back on fiscal reforms that she said were bringing in billions of pesos in revenues.

To abolish the 12-percent VAT would be to endanger the country's economic future, Ms Arroyo said in her eighth State of the Nation Address (Sona) before Congress.

In a Sinsha-colored Maria Clara gown, Ms Arroyo said the revenues from VAT would help the Philippines weather what she described as a "horrific tsunami" of global economic uncertainty.

"For the guts not to flinch in the face of tough choices, I thank God," she told the joint chambers of Congress. "For the wisdom to recognize how needed you are, I thank you, Congress. For hearing the bell, I thank the taxpayers."

GMA STANDS, A8

ACTIVISTS hurl President Macapagal-Arroyo's effigy in protest over her frequent foreign travels, blocking traffic on Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City. (MATT, JOY)

PRESIDENT Arroyo says she will stay the course because "we have come too far and made too many sacrifices to turn back." (KEY, JOY)

Jeers from foes but a near-perfect score from top ally

By the Inquirer Staff

FILIPINOS WILL JUST HAVE TO GRIN and bear it, or scowl and bear it.

That's essentially how administration supporters, opposition figures and business leaders reacted to President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision, announced in her State of the Nation Address (Sona), to keep the expanded value-added tax (VAT) in the face of skyrocketing oil and food prices.

"We must be part of the solution. Each Filipino has a responsibility to his family, his community and his country. We must not rely on the government alone. We must all work together," Vice President Noli de Castro said.

Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, president of the United Opposition, delivered his version of the state of the nation by citing government figures: Almost 3 million Filipinos are unemployed, 7 million are underemployed, inflation is a record in 14 years at 11.4 percent.

"This is the true state of the nation in the year 2008. Let us hope this ends in 2010, or earlier, so the prolonged suffering of the nation will be ended, and the people will wake up to a new morning," Binay said.

Businessmen, however, heaved a sigh of relief.

Alberto Lim, executive director of

JEERS, A8

EDITA Burgos, mother of missing activist Jonas Burgos, faces a phalanx of antiriot police on Commonwealth Avenue. (Story on Page A6.) (ALEX, LOVE)

Read my lips: President backs natural planning

By Michael Lim Ubac and Christian V. Esguerra

SERVING NOTICE TO LAWMAKERS ahead of plenary debates over the controversial reproductive health bill, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday reaffirmed her support for natural family planning over artificial methods such as condoms and pills.

In her eighth State of the Nation Address (Sona), the President said her administration's adherence to natural methods had actually trimmed the country's population growth rate.

"By promoting natural planning and female education, we have curbed population growth to 2.04 percent during our administration, down from the 2.36 in the 1990's, when artificial birth control was pushed," Ms Arroyo said halfway through her headlong foray before a

READ, A8

JDV, Erap shy away from GMA show

By Christian V. Esguerra and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

HOW TIMES CHANGE. HOW FRAGile friendships are.

Former Speaker Jose de Venecia, once an ardent supporter of President Macapagal-Arroyo, was nowhere in sight yesterday when she delivered her eighth State of the Nation Address (Sona) before Congress.

JDV, ERAP, A11

Red-banner protesters go green

By Tarra Quismundo, Marlen Ramos and Alcuin Papa

HARD TIMES HAVE PROMPTED PROtesters to recycle and economize.

Carrying faded three-year-old banners and effigies made of recycled paper and cheap cloth, they denounced President Macapagal-Arroyo's eighth State of the Nation Address (Sona) as "pretentious."

Some 20 minutes before the President faced the joint session of Congress, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) burned down an effigy of a smiling Ms Arroyo while aboard a plane painted with the colors of the United States.

In 10 minutes, the effigy burned to the beat of drums and a circle dance

RED-BANNER, A7

WAKE-UP CALL IN THE MILITARY

Yano: AFP not perfect, but reforms are afoot

By Nikko Dizon

(Second of three parts)

GEN. ALEXANDER YANO, CHIEF OF staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, concedes there are shortcomings in the military.

"It may not be a perfect organization, but we have made a lot of improvements in various fields, administrative, logistical and operational," Yano says. "There are stalemates or isolated cases (of corruption), but it's not a massive malpractice that is sanctioned by the organization."

For one thing, initiatives are being made to address very basic problems outlined in the Feliciano Commission report that was released in October 2003: the plight of wounded soldiers, the poor condition of basic weapons, the small number of transport and combat vehicles, and antiquated radios.

The old model radios, which required dozens of D-sized batteries that were quickly expended, have been replaced with handheld radios with lithium batteries. The Army says it now has

YANO: AFP, A6

i-TEAM Report
Fernando del Mundo
Chief

JPE wrong, SC right, says Miriam

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO yesterday said imports of second-hand vehicles were not allowed by the Supreme Court and payment of taxes and duties would not make them legal in the Cagayan Export Zone.

"The court banned importation of used vehicles. If the ban is violated, no amount of customs duties and taxes can justify an illegal act," Santiago said in reaction to Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's claim that Executive Order No. 156 was wrong.

The Supreme Court upheld EO 156 banning second-hand imports, specifically in the Subic and Cebu free ports.

Santiago gave her views on the importation of used vehicles at Port Irene in Sta. Ana, Cagayan, on the eve of the Senate hearing on the alleged smuggling activities at the port. The committee on ways and means, chaired by Sen. Francis Escudero, is conducting the hearing.

The Supreme Court decision has prompted importers and customers of

JPE WRONG, A6

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

PCSO 6/42 Lotto Numbers (current and previous draws) and Megalotto 6/45 results

'Something fishy' in Meralco ruling

Switching of GSIS case between CA divisions draws ire of another justice

By Lala B. Salaverria

JUSTICE JOSE SABIO CAME OUT PUBLICLY YESTERDAY TO say something "stinks" in the recent court ruling that junked a Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) order halting the board elections of Manila Electric Co. (Meralco).

Sabio, who heads the Special 9th Division of the Court of Appeals, said he had been hearing the case filed by the government Service Insurance System (GSIS) against Meralco's controlling Lopez family when he was suddenly and unceremoniously removed from it.

Describing "quite disturbing" and "fishy" happened when another division suddenly released a decision on the case, he told reporters.

"The saying stinks," said the justice, adding that he has asked for an inquiry into the switching of the Meralco case to "preserve the court's integrity."

Sabio is the second justice to come out to protest the Meralco-SEC decision issued by the 6th Division on July 24.

Justice Myrna Dimaranan Vidal, who sits in Sabio's division, had earlier written Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Cesar de Vasquez to say it was "stuck to her to prevent constitutional" that she head another division had ruled on the case without informing her of the transfer.

It was the 6th Division of the appellate court headed by Justice Hakeem Abdulwahid Sayre that issued the controversial decision on July 24 voiding the SEC order stopping the power utility's hotly contested May 27 board election. The Lopez family retained control of Meralco.

Together with Sayre in the 6th division were Justices Vicente Reyes (the ponente) and Arsenio Magpale Jr.

Pilares added what he thought the reason for the case-switching was, Sabio said, "I'd rather it come out in the investigation."

And when asked if the Meralco-GSIS case was what he was referring to when he revealed during a recent talk at the University of the Philippines that he had rejected money offered in relation to a case, he replied, "Ask me an other question, and I will tell you no lie."

He also said he was unaware of the motive of Sayre and Reyes for apparently grabbing the case.

"Your guess is as good as mine. But for it to say that I just don't want the house of this court to be undermined and I don't want the integrity of this court to be compromised," he said.

Magpale has called for a raze en banc session of the 66 Jose Gil appellate court justices, including those based in Cebu and Cagayan de Oro cities, on July 31 to discuss the issue.

Sabio said the recommendation of Meralco and the GSIS surrounding their appointees were resolved by his division on July 30, but Justice Vidal was already being asked to sign the decision on July 31.

Pilares was also the designated ponente of Sabio's 9th Division.

"How can you prepare a more than 30-page decision without having read the memorandum? To me it was an act of you know, I cannot describe it, but it was a serious exercise for the parties to file a memorandum when it was not going to be used... because the decision was already made. That was the case that made me feel angry. That was the whole process," he said.

Sabio also said he found "stupid" and assaultly Meralco's July 7 motion urging Reyes to assume the chairmanship of the division. He said the proper pleading was a motion to inhibit, and added that his participation in the case was never questioned during oral arguments.

"I told Justice Reyes that under the circumstances, if he would insist on assuming the chairmanship, then something was wrong," he said.

He also noted that a decision on the Meralco-GSIS case that Vidal signed on July 11 was withdrawn on the ground that it was missing certain pages.

The vice justices of the 9th Division done learned that Sayre had brought the case to the 6th Division headed by Reyes.

Sabio called as Reyes' and Reyes' appointment disrespect for the clarification they had sought from Magpale regarding which division had jurisdiction over the Meralco case.

The 6th Division's Meralco ruling, he noted, was signed on July 23, the day before Vasquez issued his opinion stating that the divisions headed by Sayre and Reyes had no jurisdiction.

Reacting to the controversy in the Court of Appeals, lawyers for Meralco yesterday defended the decision handed down by the 6th Division in their favor.

In a press statement, lawyer Sylvestre Tesoking of the Villaraza Cruz Marcelo and Angangco law office pointed to internal rules of the appellate court which state that "once a case is assigned to a justice by study or report (the ponente), [he] retains the case even if he is transferred to another division."

Tesoking pointed out that Sayre, who was the assigned ponente to the case via a raffle, was transferred to another division, the 6th, and he simply took the case along with him.

Meralco's lawyer said it was their understanding that Sabio was only presiding over the hearings because Reyes was on leave.

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RP backs end to traffic in small arms

THE PHILIPPINES IS SUPPORTING efforts to end the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons by strengthening implementation of a global instrument on marking and tracking these weapons.

In a report to the Department of Foreign Affairs, Permanent Representative to the UN in New York Hilario Davide Jr. said the country was one of the 134 that voted in favor of the "Report of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects."

Davide said the report, adopted at the end of a week-long meeting on July 18, included measures under which states agreed to ensure the fair and effective implementation of the "international instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons."

He said the instrument, first adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2005, committed states to mark their existing weapon stocks in order to reduce the chances of their ending up in the illicit market and war zones.

The report also spelled out the "way forward" in implementing the 2001 Program of Action that establishes a global framework for curbing the illicit trade in small arms, Davide said. Cynthia D. Balloon

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Fragments point to oxygen tank blast on Qantas jet

INVESTIGATORS found fragments that appeared to bolster the theory that an oxygen tank exploded on a Qantas jumbo jet, forcing it to make an emergency landing in Hawaii with a shocked hole in its fuselage, an Australian investigator said yesterday.

Neville Blyth, senior investigator at the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, said a video and other recent fragments would be tested to determine if they came from the tank, which was supposed to provide oxygen in passengers during an emergency.

He said the fragments were found in the passenger cabin close to where the missing tank had been stored in the cargo hold, along with five other cylinders.

The Boeing 747-400 had to make an emergency landing after a quick descent from 9,800 meters (32,000 feet) on Friday. No one among the 365 passengers and crew who reported hearing a loud bang before the plane suddenly depressurized, was injured.

"We recovered ... a valve from an oxygen cylinder," Blyth told a news conference. "It is likely that that valve is from the missing cylinder."

If the valve and other fragments are determined to have come from the cylinder, further investigation would be required to determine why the tank burst, he said.

The aircraft flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder arrived yesterday in Australia, where officials said it would take them several days to download the information they contain.

Blyth said other Australian safety officials said they were unaware of any previous cases in which an oxygen tank caused an airline accident. Qantas has ordered all oxygen tanks in its fleet of 747-400s to be urgently inspected.

Some passengers told Australian media that their oxygen masks failed to work properly during the crisis, leading some to smoke cigarettes.

The US Federal Aviation Administration had earlier warned airlines to inspect the oxygen cylinders on their planes.

David Cox, Qantas head of engineering, told reporters yesterday the FAA directive applied to a different type of oxygen system than the one being scrutinized in the Qantas emergency.

Three of Qantas' aircraft were affected by the FAA directive and all were inspected by January 2007, Cox said.

The airline's chief executive, Geoff Dixon, said that whatever caused the "very very bad accident" was likely beyond the airline's control.

"We don't know and we can't speculate on what happened to this aircraft," Dixon told a news conference. "Obviously there is every chance it is something to do with the aircraft, and it is something that may have well been out of our control. More than likely it was."

The FAA's directive followed a request that certain oxygen cylinders' support brackets in Boeing 737-800s may not have been properly heat-treated, which the FAA said could create oxygen leaks and fire.

The plane, en route from London to Melbourne stopped over in Hong Kong an hour before making the emergency landing at the Hilo Airport International Airport.

Four Australian Transport Safety Bureau specialists were inspecting the aircraft, with assistance from Boeing and the US National Transportation Safety Board.

Officials have said there was no indication a bomb might have caused the incident.

AP, Akiko Dunn

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Nograles to solons: Live simply, spend wisely

By Norman Bordadora and Christian Esguerra

SPEAKER PROSPERO NOGRALES yesterday called on his colleagues in the House of Representatives to live frugally and use public funds judiciously as their respective constituencies struggle with rising food and fuel costs.

Nograles made the call as the House undergoes a P200-billion renovation.

"We must provide the leadership to terms of exemplifying values that can help strengthen our people's will to overcome these economic difficulties. Let us inspire our people. Let us live simply," Nograles said in his speech before the opening session of the Senate.

"Let us all work hard. And most of all, let us use the resources of government judiciously and wisely," he added.

Nograles in his speech declined the multibillion-peso renovation job, saying the upgrading of the 33-year-old legislative building was started after consultation with leaders of all the major political parties.

"Let me say, before we, this is not his show. This is being done to restore the institutional dignity of this house," he said.

Pending over his first state-of-the-nation-affair, Nograles also sought to dispel other concerns of the House, such as its pork barrel spending.

In press kits distributed to members of the media, the House organizing committee included a pamphlet on how the pork barrel system works.

Written by Nograles and committee on appropriations chair Abed Laguesa of Albay, the booklet details the role of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (pork barrel) in countryside development. The authors denied it was a source of kickbacks to unscrupulous politicians.

In a separate booklet detailing his legislative agenda, Nograles called on his colleagues to go out and conduct public forums explaining to their constituents how they spend their P70-billion pork barrel allocation.

In his speech, Nograles said the House would monitor the executive branch with "more vigor and indifference."

Congressional oversight is a "democratic tool to promote good governance by helping curb graft and corruption," he said.

"We intend to demand more reporting and gather more information on all programs and projects. We need to know how under hood are being implemented, especially why they are perceived (as being) implemented as poorly."

Nograles outlined priority pieces of "social protection" legislation, among them: A resolution allowing the use of the unutilized collection of value-added taxes for social programs; VAT exemption on the sale of electricity to marginalized consumers; transport fare discounts for students and senior citizens; agricultural credit for farmers; rewards for informants on rice hoarders; additional tax breaks for land-to-tenes beneficiaries; a credit insurance system for agricultural and insurance industry code, and strengthened consumer protection.

Also on a related priority for are bills liberalizing the civil aviation industry amending the Civil Aeronautics Law, the Mandatory Code of Air Transportation, reconstituting the Philippine Ports Authority, and creating the Philippine Railways Development Agency.

Nograles said there was also a need to enact policies to increase savings and encourage the inflow of foreign investments, including the regulatory framework for retirement funds.

Other policy thrusts, he said, would focus on the development of renewable energy, developing the natural gas industry, boosting the infrastructure development, and strengthening agriculture and increasing support to the housing sector by strengthening the Home Development Mutual Fund.

He added that the House was also prepared to amend the Cooperatives Code to remove the current self-imposition in the countryside.

Kenney: GMA doing wonderful job

By Marlon Ramos

WHILE PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo was receiving flattering words from Japan, Ambassador to the United States Kristie Kenney in Davao City said progress is being made in the country.

Kenney, who is on a visit to Davao City, said she believed the country was doing a good job implementing major economic policies.

When asked to rate the President's performance, however, Kenney evaded the question. "I think she has done a wonderful job of putting this nation on very solid economic footing," was all she would say.

The US ambassador led a tree-planting activity with Davao City Mayor Felicisimo Bellosillo Jr.

For her part, Schwenk said the President must have her economic policies for the last two years of her term.

"I think a lot of them [economic policies] have to do with social structures and cushioning the blow we got from high prices of fuel and food," he said the business.

Instead of focusing on her legacy, Schwenk said the President should focus on economic strategies to address the problems caused by the skyrocketing prices of electricity, oil and basic commodities "in this time of emergency."

Kenney, who was the guest speaker during the flag-raising ceremony at the Quezon City Hall grounds, also gave her views on the great opportunities between the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

MILF representatives, led by Mohagher Iqbal, walked out of the informal negotiations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Friday after the government supposedly reneged on the initial of memorandum of domain. But the talks were back on track Sunday with the initialing of an agreement.

Kenney said United States assistance to impoverished communities in Mindanao would continue.

"America is a very dedicated partner in Mindanao and the Philippines. We don't only expect that to continue, we expect that to grow," Kenney said impatiently. "We are very prepared to offer same very exciting prospects toward more livelihood projects [in Mindanao]."

Kenney said it was important the both parties to push through with the peace agreement to spur economic development not only in Mindanao but other parts of the country.

Villar safe at Senate helm, for now

By Gil Cabuenas Jr.

SENATE PRESIDENT MANUEL Villar emerged yesterday as still the head of the upper chamber as yet another attempt to remove him failed due to the lack of members.

Days before President Macapagal-Arroyo was to deliver her State of the Nation Address at the opening of Congress, the Senate was rife with rumors a key administration senator had teamed with some of the seven opposition senators and a like counterpart of at least five administration senators to muster a majority that would elect either Sen. Richard Gordon or Sen. Aloy Arroyo as the new Senate president.

Gordon confirmed he had received feelers from both the majority and minority blocs on the possibility of forming a new alliance that would change the Senate leadership.

Villar himself confirmed he was aware something to remove move was cooking, but dismissed this as normal in the halls of Congress.

"There will always be people joining for my post," he said. "But I am confident I still have the support of the majority of the senators. This is a regular thing every time the Senate comes up last week to say usually comes of this."

Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago stood up for Villar, backing out at those who she said coveted his post, reportedly since the 2010 elections were only two years away.

"The country will not gain anything by changing the Senate President when there are only two years left. A change in leadership is always disruptive," Santiago said, as she reiterated her continued support for Villar.

"Of course, he enjoys an advantage over other presidential wannabes. Therefore, it is obvious that any coup attempt is driven by presidential ambitions, whether direct or indirect. That's no problem," she said.

Observers say Villar could face more takeover attempts by the opposition which includes in its ranks presidential contenders for 2010, notably Senators Mar Roxas, Loren Legarda and Panfilo Lacson.

Corrections

IN THE JULY 27 ISSUE, a front page photo credit inadvertently omitted the name of the contributor of a photograph of Mandaluyong Rep. Benhur Abalos Jr. The photo was contributed by Tess Felicano.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A6 misspelled the surname of one of the four winners of Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Edition Plus. The winner's name is Nicole Quinsaeng—not Quinsaen.

* * *

IN THE JULY 28 ISSUE, a Business article on Page B3, "...Yuan, in the Czech's bid, attracted buying"—understood that a majority of Filipino consumers lived on less than $2 a day. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute, about 15 million Filipinos (or about 22 percent of the population) based on 2007 figures) lived on less than a dollar a day.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors or writing to the Public Editor, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PCI Building, Chino Roces Avenue cor. Yakal Street, Makati City, fax this, 897-47-00, 892-2966, e-mail: inq@inquirer.com.ph.

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Coast Guard wants thorough BMI report

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE BOARD OF MARINE inquiry which investigated the sinking of the MV Princess of the Stars has been directed to expand its findings by including a discussion on the transport of the pesticide endosulfan and other dangerous cargo.

Philippine Coast Guard commandant Vice Adm. Wilfredo Tamayo said that although the BMI report discussed factual findings with regard to the ship's toxic cargo, the issue was not thoroughly discussed.

He said he learned that the BMI yesterday to finds out the issue.

Tamayo is reviewing the report before transmitting it to the Department of Transportation and Communication, he described the report as "good."

"They did not mention in the findings specific recommendations in relation to the endosulfan. The dangerous goods and cargo should be given more focus in the findings and recommendations," he said in a phone interview.

He had already informed the BMI report in the board since before the start the discussion is in the client and cite the documentary evidence used by its members.

The BMI concluded last week its investigation into the cause of the sinking of the 23,000-ton ship off Sibuyan Island, Romblon, at the height of Typhoon "Frank" last month.

The Princess of the Seas was carrying more than 800 people, majority of whom have yet to be accounted for and are believed entombed in the upturned vessel.

The revelation the ship was carrying the pesticide endosulfan fueled opposition to remove the victims' bodies. The endosulfan was being delivered to Del Monte Philippines Inc. for use in its pineapple plantations in Bukidnon.

Aside from Del Monte, Bayer was also reported to have shipped possibly toxic chemicals aboard the Princess of the Stars.

The Daily Gospel

Tuesday, July 29, 2008
17th Week in Ordinary Time
Martha

1st Reading: Jer 14:17-22
Gospel: Mt 13:36-43

Jesus was the seventh among and went into the house. And his disciples came to him saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He answered them, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seed are the people of the Kingdom, the weeds are those who follow the evil one. The enemy who sows them is the devil; the harvest is the end of time and the reapers are the angels.

"Just as the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom all that is troublesome and all who do evil. And those will be thrown in the blazing furnace, where there will be crying and gnashing of teeth. Then the just will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. If you have ears, listen!"

Commentary

A farmer cannot force the harvest. Plants blossom and bear fruit in due season and there is nothing that the farmer can do to hasten the process.

In the same way, the establishment of God's plan, the harvest of the good from the bad, will come in due time, according to a schedule that is known only to God. Ours is to be patient, to persistently seek the guidance and strength of God in order to be good grain. The weeds, the followers of the evil one, will receive their just reward, all in God's good time.

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GMA admin has lowest approval rating–SWS

THE ARROYO ADMINISTRATION has incurred the dubious distinction of having the lowest net satisfaction rating among four administrations after the Marcos regime, according to the latest Social Weather Stations survey.

The decline in the Arroyo administration's satisfaction rating from minus 14 in the first three months of the year to minus 21 in the second quarter can be attributed to the 10-point plunge in the administration's rating in the Visayas, which is considered a bailiwick of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Results SWS survey findings showed that Ms. Arroyo is the most unpopular leader the country has had since 1986.

The survey found that 49 percent of adult Filipinos were dissatisfied with the overall performance of the administration and 28 percent were satisfied, for a net satisfaction rating of minus 21.

The Visayas rating dropped from minus 8 (44 percent dissatisfied, 36 percent satisfied) to minus 26 (52 percent dissatisfied, 26 percent satisfied), a record low for the area.

The administration's rating also fell in Mindanao (from minus 17 to minus 23), but rose in Metro Manila (from minus 33 to minus 27) and the rest of Luzon (from minus 20 to minus 14).

From June 27 to 30, SWS interviewed 1,200 adults all over the country for the quarterly nationwide survey, which has a margin of error of plus-or-minus 3 percentage points.

SWS also asked respondents to rate the administration's performance on 18 specific issues.

The Arroyo administration received poor ratings on controlling graft and corruption (minus 22), on ensuring that no family will be hungry (minus 18) and on fighting inflation (minus 16).

Last month, the country recorded an 11.4-percent inflation rate, its highest in 14 years. The last rise in prices was attributed to the retroactive increase in food costs.

The Arroyo administration obtained excellent ratings on crime fighting (+4), ensuring the afford-ability of medicines (+6), land distribution to deserving tillers (+8), fighting terrorism (+10) and reconciling with Moro rebels (+14).

It got moderate ratings on foreign relations (+13) and helping the poor (+13).

In the past few months, the Arroyo administration has been giving financial assistance to the poor, such as the 2500 subsidy to Metalco contractors who are less than 100 kilometers from a month and the P1,500 fertilizer subsidy to farmers. (with reports from Cynthia Balana and Bonnie Black)

Jonas Burgos ma seeks relief in the streets

By Jeannette I. Andrade

LEGAL IMPASSE IN THE search for missing activist Jonas Joseph Burgos have driven his mother to seek 'relief' in the streets, joining thousands of protesters on Commonwealth Avenue rallying President Macapagal-Arroyo's focus "to instead of him."

"I am here to express my strong support for the disappearance (disappeared) and to protest against this government," Edita Burgos, the family's matriarch, said as she prepared to join the march of some 4,000 activists toward the Batasan Complex in Quezon City where the President was to deliver her speech.

It was Edita's first time to join a mass rally. "This is one of the few times I open in my mouth," she said, referring to the recent dismissal by the Court of Appeals of her family's petition for the issuance for a writ of amparo.

The writ could be invoked before the courts to seek the release of or protect his or a person, or to compel government operatives to allow certain places to be inspected.

"If I assume 'final relief' from our institutions, this Union person merely might help," she said, lamenting how her petition was lambed by the court.

Edita expressed exasperation over the fact that the Court of Appeals dismissed the petition allegedly because of the family's failure to name Jonas' abductors.

Jonas went missing on April 28 last year after he was abducted by armed men from the Five Gateway Mall in Quezon City. Incidentally, the human rights groups earlier confirmed to some their persons were the place where Jonas was abducted.

Edita, along with other relatives of the disappeared, led the march of thousands from Tandang Sora Avenue along with members of Bayan, Gabriela, Anakpawis, Sanlakas, Partido ng Manggagawa, Bisig Mata, Bilusang Mayo Uno, Kadamay, Alyansan of Seniors and Technology for the People, Barkadang Gatubian ng Bisang Pilipinas, Youth for Accountability and Truth Now, Health Alliance for Democracy and Union of Students for Morality and Truth.

Vendors enjoy brisk business from hungry protesters

By Marlon Ramos

PAREDE PROTESTERS TOOK TO the streets, Lito Mercado was busy attending to her customers at the makeshift carinderia (food stall) that she and her husband put up on the sidewalk on Commonwealth Avenue.

"The recession effect is an opportunity to earn to them diffi-

cult times," the 35-year-old mother told the inquirer as she handed over a bottle of soda to a young woman.

Like any other protest rallies, President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address (Sona) gave Mercado and other vendors an opportunity to sell their wares and merchandise.

For almost six hours, the 500-meter stretch of Commonwealth Avenue between Quirino Highway and Tandang Sora Avenue was turned into a marketplace for a number of hawkers selling food items, clothes and other personal stuff.

Push-bull carts and barbecue stalls selling pork barbecues, grilled innards and dried squid sprouted on the highway.

Mercado, who runs a variety store in front of a school in Barangay Holy Spirit, said she put up as early as 2 a.m. to buy more and other supplies from a nearby public market.

As of 1 p.m., Mercado said she had already recovered the P2,500 that she had spent for the goods she bought.

She said she expected to earn as much as P6,000 before the protesters leave the area.

Yano: AFP not perfect, but reforms afoot

Front page A-2

926 units of these radios that were bought from the United States last month. The delivery of 5,083 SW VHF/FM handheld radios is under way.

The commission also noted that the Army's rifles "are so accurate that they literally look like rifles, and they easily" malfunction. The new pistols have been issued since the 1960s."

Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Bernie Briones says that the Army now has a total of 2,300 Signal Automatic Weapons (SAW) with ammunition requirements.

"When it comes to the replacement of M-16s, the Philippine Army is undergoing rebuilding. For the period of 2000 up to date, the Army has already rebuilded a total of 22,198 M-16 rifles," Brawner says.

Last December, 100 5-ton trucks were delivered to the Army and another 50 units arrived in January he says.

Maj. Gen. Gilbert Llanza, AFP deputy chief of staff for plans, says the Army is awaiting the delivery of 28 units of Cobra gunships and seven P70-B millions that troops can use in searchlands and swamps.

The Marines are also set to get four units of Sikjet Hull Inflatable Boats (RHIBs).

In the next three to six months, nearly P4 billion worth of communication equipment will be delivered to the AFP according to Llanza.

Funding for PAF, Navy

As for the Philippine Air Force, spokesperson Maj. Gerry Candelaria says that for the PAF is struggling with its chronic pilot-to-aircraft ratio, there has been an upgrading of the engines of its SIG 520 attack helicopters and the refurbishing of its C-130 cargo planes.

"The main problem of the Air Force is it has a huge funding requirement," Candelaria says.

The same goes for the Navy, which requires big-ticket items.

Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV, the detained coup-plotting leader who is now a senator, says that lack of funds was the primary problem in the failure to implement the AFP modernization law.

Defense Secretary Orlando Teodoro Jr. says the government should carry the burden of spending for the AFP Modernization funds should not be "centralized on events," such as proposals from the rule or lease of AFP lands, he added.

Both Teodoro and Trillanes believe in the importance and urgency of having a well-crafted, comprehensive national defense policy on which an AFP modernization program would be based.

The task of such a policy related to the crafting of a highly ambitious and costly AFP modernization law which is not even responsive to the actual needs of the AFP in accomplishing the tasks given to it," Trillanes says.

Finite life for reforms

Teodoro will lead a review this year of the Philippine Defense Reform (PDR) programs, the 2000 blueprint to upgrade the AFP's capabilities.

"There must be a life to the reform program because we cannot have a cause of perpetual reform. We will see our goals within the year as to where it should end and where the functions of the PDR should be undertaken by the major services," Teodoro says. But at this time, we go back already to normal operations, inputting those reforms. That should have a finite life. There should be an end-state," Teodoro says.

Teodoro is pooling together a multi-disciplinary group with representatives from the AFP, the budget department, the academe, and even the media—to have a strategic defense policy.

"I want to come up with a policy paper so that the importance need of strengthening the Armed Forces vis-à-vis our regional partners, our international engagements, not merely in terms right now of controlling the internal security situation but a step ahead after that," Teodoro says.

The policy paper, which Teodoro calls a "white paper" for lack of a better term, is important for "advocacy purposes."

Need to understand concept

Teodoro says he must be made to understand the concept of modernization while legislators should realize that "although it is very expensive to modernize, it must be done."

Panch should not only be allowed for the acquisition of new equipment, but also for its modernization.

Teodoro says he is looking at a defense establishment 20 years from.

"We cannot sacrifice forward planning, envisioning for the Armed Forces. Perhaps in a paradigm when the Philippines becomes a regional player, a regional power, we have to do that now. If there's a windfall in the future, if we have more resources, we will not have the policy guidelines to use these resource efficiently... We need to follow a well thought of, well-crafted map which should be flexible enough to address the dynamics of International realities," the defense secretary said.

For one, he thinks the AFP is too small for a 100-million population projected in the next few years to an unbridgeable ration.

There should also be changes in personnel positions in the AFP such as "transferring civilian and uniformed people with specialization to the military, Teodoro says.

Soldiers say AFP hospital below standard

By Leila B. Salaverria

IT HAS THE AIR OF A FORTRESS RATHER than a hospital.

Military police guard the entrance of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Medical Center (AFPMC) in a crowded area in Quezon City. It has a high fence topped by barbed wire. Armed by military recruits is entirely prohibited.

What awaits the nation's premier military hospital holds remain unclear, but soldiers and their dependents who have been confined there say services are below par and facilities are not something to crow about.

The medical treatment of soldiers living on edge, risking enemy gunfire and jungle terror has been one of the major causes of unrest in the ranks that has fueled repeated mutinies.

A commission formed by President Macapagal-Arroyo to investigate grievances aired by a group of disgruntled soldiers who took over the Oakwood entertainment complex in July 2003 has ordered to stop about military health care.

In its report issued in October 2003, the commission headed by former Supreme Court Justice Florentino P. Feliciano, says "(1) the AFP military service needs more money—for medicine, food, facilities, doctors and (2) it has many closet severity of its management practices."

"The close relationship between the personal availability of adequate medical services when needed by troops engaged in encounters with hostile forces, and the fighting efficiency and morale of such troops, needs no documentation," the Feliciano Commission says.

Doctors leaving in droves

Recent interviews conducted by the Inquirer show that little has changed since the Feliciano Commission report was issued in October 2003.

Demoralized doctors have been leaving the AFPMC because of disunity over the choice of leaders in the medical officers, low pay, little opportunity for career advancement and perceived unhappiness over working conditions.

The reasons are privy to the latest workings of the 70-year-old AFPMC, another edition is the V. Luna General Hospital, but spoke only on condition of anonymity to avoid reactions.

AFPMC commander Col. Ariel Jurtado says that the military facility is "competitive" with private hospitals when it comes to the procedures that it could do, including open heart surgery and neurosurgery.

He also disputes any claim that there is demoralization, saying that if there were any, they were only isolated grumblings from "three or four doctors who may have felt personally slighted by recent appointments."

Jurtado says the AFPMC has zero advantage over private medical institutions. "All of our services and medicine are free for soldiers and their dependents. What private hospital can top that?"

The exodus of doctors is a "natural problem," Jurtado says, but specialists volunteer to serve at the AFPMC out of patriotism.

But critics say that some of the pioneers AFPMC doctors may not even be the most qualified. They are not even diplomates and fellows, meaning they have not undergone specialization training and are not recognized by accreditation groups of a particular field of practice, says one official who recently quit.

"If you have a heart problem, would you undergo operation with a doctor who is not a cardiologist? If your hospital has no accredited departments, the hospital is doing medicine treatment," this official says.

The dwindling number of doctors also means more work for those soldiering on. This leads to a tendency for the personnel to be overworked, increasing the chances for errors and decreasing the quality of health care.

More resident doctors needed

As a result, the AFPMC has been getting more visiting doctors. But then, their priority is not the military. The hospital needs more resident doctors who are always on call, the source says.

"When you get an emergency case and the visiting doctor is not available, what would happen to the soldier?" says another source.

Jurtado says that visiting consultants are available when they are needed.

The doctor-patient ratio is one factor in gauging a hospital's competence, he says. In hospitals administered by the Department of Health, the ratio is 1:6.

Jurtado says the AFPMC's doctor-patient ratio is 1:3, based on the average occupancy rate of 800. He says the hospital has 69 doctors, 98 residents, nine civilian specialists, 80 visiting consultants plus volunteers.

But the source says that the AFP hospital has a much higher ratio when it comes to the individual departments, pointing out that general surgery has a ratio of 1:22.

It is important to appoint medical officers who have practiced medicine for a long time so that they would know how to manage serious ailments, unlike most doctors, and inspire employees, the critics say.

"Your manager may not be smart so to be in a mission, but he may not know what you are doing and he might make a wrong decision for you. He is competent, but what he knows is not in accordance with what he is managing. It's like a house carriage driver telling a carpenter how to build design," the official says.

Comments over the appointment of officers without the necessary experience have prompted the resignation of all but two of the 10 doctors who underwent training at the hospital, according to one source.

But Jurtado says such claims probably came from those who are indulging in "sour grapes" because they were not promoted.

As for the AFPMC equipments and facilities, the sources say these could be improved, but are not that deplorable. For instance, the number of operating rooms could be increased, since less than half of the nine such rooms are functioning.

A steady supply of anesthesia should also be available. There have been instances, the sources say, when operations had to be put off because there is no anesthesia available.

PHILIPPINE troops parade newly acquired military trucks from South Korea in this photo taken during the 52nd anniversary of the Armed Forces in Camp Aguinaldo last year AFP PHOTO

Staff more important

Jurtado says the AFPMC's budget has to be increased for the acquisition of new equipment. The proposed 2004 budget for the hospital is P711 million, but since this has yet to be approved, it is operating on the P511-million 2003 budget. The ideal annual budget would be over P800 million.

The bulk of the budget is spent on personnel services.

The sources stress that competent and highly skilled doctors and nurses are needed to properly treat patients suffering from ailments, who are suffer from malaria, ulcers, hypertension and war shock.

"The facilities are not as important as the staff. There's a saying that it is not the gun, it is the man behind the gun," the official says.

JPE wrong, SC right, says Miriam

Front page A-2

right-hand drive vehicles from the free ports to move to Port Irene in Cagayan, Estrella's home province.

More than 7,000 used cars, mostly luxury vehicles, have been sold out of Port Irene since 2000, according to the American Chamber of Commerce.

Estrella claimed that EO 156 was unconstitutional on the ground that the Supreme Court made a mistake in upholding it. He said only Congress and not Malacañang could ban an imported item.

"Under the rule of law, the Supreme Court is never wrong, it does not matter whether I agree with it or not. Even if they have made an egregious mistake. What the Supreme Court says is final and the end of the matter. It is the law, and should be obeyed without murmur, as that society will remain stable," Santiago said.

She said that the Supreme Court decision was penned by Justice Consuelo Ynares-Santiago (no relation) who was elevated by an a role model for honesty and competence by the UP Women Lawyers' Circle.

"I don't think she or the Supreme Court was wrong," Santiago said.

She said that if all the ports in the country have been privatized like the Cagayan port authorities, "that is itself would be on its security, and the law have absurdity."

Rodito Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said that Pet Irene was not an independent republic because all laws should apply to every inch of the country.

The port also been a fast-growing investment area ever since it was placed under the jurisdiction of state-owned Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

Fight goes on for vets' rights, says envoy

THE BATTLE FOR "justice and fairness" that began over 60 years ago continues to this day for Filipino war veterans who fought alongside American troops in World War II in the Philippines.

And the Filipinos' battle for veterans benefits from the US Congress has yet to be won, said Philippine Ambassador to Washington Willy Gaa in a speech marking the 67th anniversary of the Military Order to Cayetano (Military Forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, in Washington D.C. on Friday.

Gaa said young Filipino men were among the first to heed then US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's call to fight for world peace under the American flag.

In this wing hundreds of thousands of them were conscripted into the US Armed Forces and fought in guerrilla units and the Philippine Scouts under Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander of the US Armed forces in the Far East (USAFFE), Gaa said.

"Two of those units gave their lives. Many underwent indescribable hardship and torture. Thousands fell in the Bataan Death March," he said.

"President Roosevelt's military order lies at the heart of our continuing struggle to achieve recognition and equity for our brave veterans. It is the most compelling argument that supports our efforts to correct the injustice that resulted from the passage of the Rescission Act of 1946," he said.

The US Senate has passed its version of the Veterans Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007 which would provide pensions to 30,000 Filipino veterans who fought under the US flag.

A similar bill is pending in the US House of Representatives, held up purportedly by funding concerns. President Macapagal-Arroyo in her visit to the US last month met with Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other American legislators to lobby for the bill.

Cynthia D. Balana

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UNIVERSITY OF PERPETUAL HELP PLACES IN NURSING BOARD EXAM

Out of the 64,459 board passers in the June 2008 Nursing Board Examination four (4) nursing graduates from the University of Perpetual Help made it to the top 10 list. Kristine Valino Picadizo (85%), Cum Laude graduate and Anne Lorraine Trinidad Lorenzo (85%) from the Las Piñas campus placed 6th. Kristine Marie Lee Indiongco (84.60%) from Manila campus placed 8th while Fritzie Praxidio Dela Cruz (84.40%) from Biñan, Laguna campus placed 9th.

UPH President, CEO and Chairman of the Board, Dr./Col. Antonio L. Tamayo commends the board passers for bringing honors to the University and for serving as role models and inspiration to other nursing students. "We will continue to develop graduates with professional competence and social motivation to serve the people as 'Helpers of God'", Dr. Antonio Tamayo said.

Over all, the University of Perpetual Help garnered a 54% passing rate for first takers which is higher than the National Passing rate of 43.01%.

The UPH administrators will offer a thanksgiving mass for the board passers on August 6, 2008, 9 AM in the Chapels of the different campuses.

GMA stands pat on VAT

Front page A1

Apparently adverting to a recent survey showing her to be the most unpopular leader the country has had since 1986, Ms Arroyo conceded her flagging policy had brought "more unpopularity for myself in the opinion polls."

But digging in, she said: "We have come too far and made too many sacrifices to turn back now on fiscal reforms. Leadership is not about doing the first easy thing that comes to mind. It is about doing what is necessary, however hard."

Church groups, as well as some senators, congressmen, consumer organizations and militants want VAT scrapped, saying it has become an extra burden for poor Filipinos.

But economic managers, not even VAT's enemies to keep the economy in shape.

In her 58-minute speech interrupted 134 times with applause from her allies in Congress, Ms Arroyo supported the national family planning method espoused by the Catholic Church in curbing population growth. (See story on Page A12)

She also called on Congress to enact measures needed to achieve peace with Moro separatist rebels in the Mindanao.

SPEAKER Prospero Nograles extends a bottle of water to Senate President Manny Villar as the President delivers her State of the Nation Address. EDJ NOGRALES

Taxing corn cut

And as if to woo more people to her side, Ms Arroyo said she recognized that not managing had become a "way of life" in the country and announced that government revenues from land bonded has request in bring down the cost of rice moving by half, at least between telecommunication networks.

But it was in defense of the VAT that she renewed some of her strongest statements.

"Take away the VAT and you add 1 trillion out responsibility" to leaders and pull the rug from under our present and future progress, which may be compromised by the global crisis," she said.

"Take away the VAT and we make our people of the nation to the mercy of the world's hard and energy crisis."

Ms Arroyo said the VAT would help reduce foreign debt, help achieve fiscal independence for the country, and provide more investments as well as enough funding for proper programs.

She said the tax measure also spurred income conditional, citing how it helped strengthen the peso against the dollar.

P6 billion from VAT

It will be the poor who will suffer the most from the removal of the VAT on oil and electricity as this will mean the loss of P80 billion to programs being funded by VAT, Ms Arroyo claimed.

She cited the P6 billion fund from the VAT windfall that she had released or earmarked to help people cope with skyrocketing prices of commodities.

These included the P2 billion released in power subsidy for four million lifeline users, P1 billion in scholarship and school loans for 70,000 poor students, P500 million in loans to help jeepney, bus and taxi drivers cope, new diesel engines of three vehicles in the metro, scrapping of LPG and OSG, and another P500 million to install fluorescent lamps in public places.

Another P4 billion will be released to continue providing power subsidy for lifeline users in the amount of P1 billion; P500 million to help poor senior citizens without pensions; another P500 million as capital for families in the public transport service; and another half billion pesos to upgrade hospitals and their equipment.

Legislative agenda

Ms Arroyo set out her legislative agenda for her remaining 23 months in office. She called on Congress to:

- Ease the near-term pain while investing in long-term solutions such as infrastructure development, new irrigation systems, support for self-sufficiency program and subsidies for the poorest of the poor.
- Extend the Competitive Agrarian Reform Program "with reforms."

"I want the reform out of agrarian reform," she declared.

She said agrarian reform "should not merely subdivide the misery of the land, it must raise the living standards of those who work the land ... We don't want that a tenant who is freed from his landlord will be placed under the mercy of) unions."

- Ban the bill allowing the Social Security System to provide housing loans beyond the present 30-percent limitation (or abolish the law which limits SSS to utilize only 30 percent of its funds for loans).
- Pit the Senate to pass the Renewable Energy Bill to achieve energy self-sufficiency.
- Ban the Comprehensive Bill of Rights to protect consumers from price gouging, false advertising and other marketing malpractices.
- Enact a tougher Anti-Graft Act.
- Amend the Electric Power Industry Reform Act.

A nation in crisis

Citing the worsening "global economy," Ms Arroyo said she was governing a nation in "crisis."

"I say this is a global crisis where everyone is a victim," she said.

She dubbed the global economic crisis as the "worst since the Great Depression and end of World War II."

Apparently reaching out to her detractors in the opposition-dominated Senate, Ms Arroyo said: "We are three branches but one government. We have disagreements ... But we are are one nation with one law."

Cheers for Rodney

Receiving the second biggest applause — next to Ms Arroyo's announcement of a 50-percent cut in text messaging cost — was 13-year-old Rodney Bonifie of Barangay Bantilan, Bolinao, Pangasinan.

Bonifie and his mother were what may be their best clothes. The still they didn't come close to the elegance around them.

The world was, nonetheless, received massive cheers from the predominantly wealthy and middle class gallery where Ms Arroyo and he had joined his mother, brothers and sisters been drowning in the flooded waters of Sibaltan River at the height of Typhoon "Frank" in the Visayas.

"We didn't get that much education but he knows what he should do in the situation — save his family from the river," said Director Rene Cabrera of the Office of Civil Defense in Central Visayas.

Applause for Victoria, Alan

Cabrera accompanied Bonifie and his mother to the rehabilitated House to be presented by Ms Arroyo.

A group of businessmen in the gallery also applauded Victoria Ministers who Ms Arroyo said used to earn P5,000 a month as a farmer and factory worker but now earns P15,000 a week as a beneficiary of an agrarian reform community in Kabasalan town in Zamboanga Sibugay.

They also cheered Alan Almanzor—40-year-old college undergraduate and father of two—who used to earn P5,000 a day from fishing and driving a tricycle. As a rehabilitated offender under the government's tourism program, he is now earning P1,000 a day. (It takes his previous income.

"Many Filipinos are highly skilled. [What is needed is] just guiding them to the right direction, giving them the confidence and the tools and the necessary tools," said entrepreneurship advocate Amy Concepcion, who was also in the gallery.

GMA takes country on tour of its poorest regions

By Michael Lim Ubac

IN HER EIGHTH ANNUAL SONA to the nation, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo took the country on a tour of 42 poorest regions while citing what officials said were her administration's accomplishments since 2001.

Ms Arroyo said that with funds from the conventional values and tax (VAT), she had increased the infrastructure investments like Northern Samar, given out cash subsidies, college scholarships and loans to the poor, and assisted victims of Typhoon "Frank," among others.

She also cited the passage of law exempting minimum wage earners from the tax net.

She said that because of subsidy, the National Food Authority that was among the cheapest, and that his administration was able to lower the price of commercial rice in P2G.

Since 2001, new irrigation systems were constructed for 146,000 hectares, including Malaban in Magsaysaysan and North Cotabato, Lower Agusan, Casecnan and Anlo in Nueva Ecija, Abaling-Ayopan in Zambales and Ambuklao in Quirino and Isabela.

Ms Arroyo reported that the rainwaters of 60 irrigation systems on another 980,000 hectares had increased the nation's irrigated land to a historic 1.3 million hectares.

"The Land Bank has quadrupled loans for farmers and fisherfolk, and in fact not farmers. Check it," she said.

The government is providing seeds at subsidized prices to help farmers and rice production since 2000 has increased by an average of 4.07 percent a year, twice the population growth rate, she said.

As a result, self-sufficiency level down to a 20-year low to 2007, according to her.

She said her administration had distributed to the last seven years, 894,000 hectares of private farmland, 797,000 hectares of public farmland, and Certificates of Ancestral Domain (CADC) covering 520,000 hectares.

Read my lips: President backs natural planning

Front page A1

latest session of the 14th Congress.

"Informed choice should mean letting married couples, who are mostly Catholics, know about natural family planning," said Ms Arroyo, a Catholic mother of three.

By recalling the 1990s, Ms Arroyo was apparently referring to the policy maintained by then President Fidel Ramos, a Protestant, that people's calls to limit the number of their children should be removed both natural and artificial birth control methods.

Three babies are born every minute in the Philippines and experts have said the country needs to slow population growth if it wants to achieve self-sufficiency in rice. Ms Arroyo, who relies on powerful Catholic bishops for support, dismissed that argument.

"Rice production since 2000 increased an average of 4.07 percent a year, twice the population growth rate," she said.

Reading approval on sound reading at the House of Representatives, the reproductive health (RH) bill seeks to make available to couples a choice on family planning methods. The measure had been substituted for four distinct bills after it was approved at the committee level in May.

On Friday, Catholic bishops gathered some 12,000 faithful and spearheaded a rally denouncing the RH bill on the University of Santo Tomas campus in Manila.

Lagman's reaction

Reached for comment yesterday, Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, chief proponent of the RH bill, said the President should not "ignore the decision Filipino couples make on which family planning method to use.

"It all boils down to freedom of choice," Lagman told the Inquirer. "Her endorsement (of natural family planning) is her choice and we respect that. But couples should also make their own choice in the same manner that the President has made here."

Lagman cited a study showing 35.9 percent of Filipinos embracing modern and artificial birth control methods and only 16.9 percent saying they would stick to natural methods.

"So if you take (the President's statement) in the context of data," Lagman said, "we should be able to promote both methods and let couples and women decide on what to do."

But from applauding Ms Arroyo, however, a ranking Catholic prelate said her latest statement on promoting the population debate seemed "too good to be true."

"I think she's just trying to earn political points from the CBCP [Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines], said Diagnisian Archbishop Oscar Cruz.

"She's politicizing the issue when it's a moral one," Cruz added.

He also doubted the President's report on the country's slowing population growth, citing figures from the National Statistics Office showing that Filipino have already numbered almost 90 million as of last year. "I don't know what to believe," the archbishop said.

Fr. Melvin Castro, executive secretary of the CBCP Commission on Family and Life, said he would have to "wait and see" if Malacañang was really sincere in its support for the Church-sanctioned natural family planning methods. *With a report from Krisitine Alave, Reuters*

Jeers from foes but a near-perfect score from top ally

Front page A1

the usually critical Makati Business Club (MBC), endorsed Ms Arroyo's decision to hold VAT.

As expected, she defended the VAT and her program programs," Lim said. "We agree with her on that."

Governor about Malacañang's possible policy shift on the VAT to alarmed the business community, according to Jesus Arranz, chairman of the Philippines, the Financial Executive Institute of the Philippines and the Action for Economic Reforms on Friday issued a joint statement urging Ms Arroyo to leave the law untouched.

Her supposed satisfaction that the VAT system put the long-term good of the economy over the temptation to gain short-term approval from the public even as surveys showed her popularity ratings hitting new lows.

Drivers threaten strike

The militant jeepney drivers' organization Piston announced it would stage a two-day strike beginning today in the front to give.

"We might be forced to launch a nationwide strike if PGMA continues to resist the drivers' and people's call to lift the VAT on oil," said Piston secretary general Dessie Ilao Mateo.

Sen. Mar Roxas said he was utterly disappointed with the speech. "Still in charge, it is uninspiring, there is no clear direction, she is defensive," Roxas said.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano said that being the self-styled leaders of the nation did not mean Ms Arroyo should just greet multinational businessmen instead of specific solutions to solve problems.

Almost perfect score

"The 'presidentiables' should step up and fill the void that the president cannot address. It's time for real proposals, programs and plans. This is what debate should be about. 'Statesmen' falling as, we need a visible and creative alternative," Cayetano said.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago gave Ms Arroyo close to a perfect mark (13.5 with 1 being the highest) for her State. She said she could see the pain in the President's eyes which showed how hurt she was from all the criticisms and insults against her.

But Sen. Francis Escudero chided Ms Arroyo for her refusal to suspend the VAT. "I disagree with her 'no economics'," he said. "It does not show that she cares about the public, she just cared how long the public could take on the VAT burden."

Sens. Panfilo Lacson, who was absent in the State, said the President was just taking the public for a ride when she talked about fighting the "boring" (mallong) cops from the street. "Boring disappeared when the sun set on President. It made a comeback when she became the President," he said.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada said: "She defended the VAT as beneficial but that is exactly what is putting a heavy burden on the public."

Another fairy tale'

Sen. Juanito Marcos Lacson said: "It was another fairy tale of inconsistencies and generalities spiced up by her reckless decision to defend. It. All The VAT must now be repealed, it is a no-brainer."

Sen. Pia Cayetano said: "I felt like we're in Enchanted Kingdom. Her media experts left us how rough things really are."

Ms Arroyo's allies in Congress, however, gave her rave reviews.

"If the State was a desk, it was full of rubrics for agriculture. It had the right mix of tactical and strategic solutions to the food crisis," Pampanga Rep. Aurelio Miller said, summing up the sentiments of pro-administration congressmen.

Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. said: "Her SEE of course, is completely correct. It's only people on the payroll of oil companies that are against VAT."

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Rufus Rodriguez of the opposition remarked: "There are other roads to give to the poor. It's about time we suspended the VAT on oil to lower the price and lessen the impact duties on oil."

Bicolano Rep. Rita Hermosa commented: "Well, at least our people are still allowed to have hope in (the Sona)."

House Senior Deputy Minority Leader Rolex Suiko said: "The President very courageously tackled head-on the issue of the hill and transformed a negative into a positive by focusing on the projects funded by the VAT revenues. Now, our Congress must cross party lines in refining the allocation of the additional tax revenue to projects that would have long-term benefits."

Ticking time bombs

Former Presidential Chief Counsel said commitment to long-term reforms was lacking in Ms Arroyo's address. Quoting the National Statistics Board, he said the country's life expectancy, calculated at 69.6 years and quality of life were far below those of other countries.

"These are long-range problems that should have been attended to over the years, faithfully, consistently and coherently," Bautista said. "We committed to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We're now at mid-point. We're far from complying with commitments."

Bautista handed out a statement where he outlined eight "ticking time bombs," including mass poverty, environmental degradation, migration for economic reasons, rapid population growth, graft and corruption, bureaucratic processes, disputes and flip-flopping decision-making, a divided society, lack of dynamic power in Mindanao, and "unsettling political field." *With reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Charlie L. Lunio, Ofi C. Gubaton, Christine U. Bagaoisan, TJ Burgonio, DJ Yap, Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson and Rita T. Olalondo*

Transport strikes, protest marches outside Metro

By the Inquirer Bureaus

A CENTRAL LUZON-WIDE transport strike, rallies decrying and protest rallies in key urban centers outside Metro Manila erupted yesterday, even before President Macapagal-Arroyo could deliver her State of the Nation Address (Sona) in Congress.

Jeepney, bus and even motorcycle drivers stopped plying their routes in Bulacan, Pampanga, Zambales, Nueva Ecija and Bataan to demand the scrapping of the value-added tax (VAT) on oil products and the Oil Deregulation Law, Bulacan Governor Joselito Mendoza Cabunoc, spokesperson of Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator sa Pilipinas (STOP), said.

In Pampanga, policemen deployed a picket line of motorcycle riders to Sasmuan checkpoint to prevent 5,000 protesting leader Rolando Cruz at 7 a.m. Cruz was released less than an hour without charges, Cunanglad said.

In Bataan, two transport leaders in Orani town, rather than join the protest, distributed leaflets to join the strike, news told to policemen, he said.

The strike, which began at 1 a.m., coincided with rallies and vigils launched by Bulacan governor Joselito Mendoza Cabunoc, according to Aurora Bonpil, BPO regional spokesperson.

In Angeles City, some 3,000 leaders and members of Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) in Central Luzon assembled for a poverty and hunger forum at the city library. In Tarlac City, some 200 students belonging to Anak ng mga Bilog-anod sa Tarlac gathered at 2 p.m. for a protest against Mr Arroyo's Sona.

Both the police and the military in Central Luzon were on full alert for the Sona.

Protest amid rain

In Baguio City, about 200 activists and students staged a rally despite strong rains as they could combat the people that the President had purportedly failed in delivers on her promise to improve their lives.

The group, led by Tanggapan O Unali, urged motorists to avoid having to to Mr Arroyo's televised Sona because the public is not needed to her "lies."

Bar Bayan Muna rep. Rep. Manuel Teehankee said he would watch the Sona. "Her Sona is about the positive points I of her administration] but the is a complete contrast to the situation we are all experiencing," he said.

In Laguna, activists gathered in Calamba City for their own "State of the Youth" address.

Led by Kasalukuyan Pinoy Gangalagan (Anakbayan-TK), they boasted an effigy of Mr Arroyo, which depicted her as Pinocchio with long facial appendages. They carried huge placards bearing the President's lies and the word "QUIT."

"The crumbling economy of the 10.1 million hungry Filipinos and the direct poverty in the countryside are enough to dispel the true state of the nation than Mr Arroyo's Sona in the newly renovated and lavish Congress," said PJ Santos, Anakbayan-TK secretary general.

Santos said his group had already gathered hundreds of signatures calling for the scrapping of the 12-percent VAT on oil and other commodities during an 18-day "cultural caravan."

Snake effigy

In Quezon, nearly 100 people paraded a snake effigy in the streets of Lucena City. According to Donato Arjardo, spokesperson of Anakbayan-Quezon, the snake symbolized the Arroyo administration's "terror" campaign in the province due to ongoing military operations against communist rebels.

Arman Abarilla, secretary general of the regional chapter of Bayan, said in a phone interview that the rally in Batangas City also featured an effigy of Mr Arroyo resembling a long-nosed Pinocchio.

Rallies were also held in Angeles City and Tarlac and Cabiao towns in Nueva Ecija province, which is dubbed as Arroyo's home province. They carried huge placards bearing the President's lies and the word "QUIT."

In Cabiao, Bayan reported spokesperson said her group opposed the takeover by National Power Corp. of the Albay Electric Cooperative and the proposed multimillion-peso Southern Luzon International Airport in Sangley town. The totality of projects, she said, would destroy 181 hectares of rice fields.

'Fish strike'

At least 2,000 people joined the rallies in Batangas, Cavite, Laguna and Albay. Lopez said the added that some fisherfolk were held in Carmelotown and Camotes Horte.

Today some 10,000 laborers of jeepneys, buses, vans and tricycles will hold a two-day strike starting 5 a.m.

At least 5,000 people will attended a two-day "Sona strike" in Masbate, Sorsogon, Albay and Catanduanes, according to Cavity Albert Corpuz, spokesperson of Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalayan ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya).

Corpuz said fishing operations would be suspended while fishing permits and other commodity-based permits will be held to show the fishing sector's opposition to the Arroyo measures.

In Iloilo City, around 2,000 farmers and class dwellers led by Bayan marched to the provincial capitol, carrying placards and streamers denouncing their plight. They said the government had failed to address the needs of people left homeless by Typhoon "Frank."

"We have been poor since we were born. But we haven't been this poor like today," said Evelina Dodo, a vendor from La Paz Barrio. Dodo said the soaring prices of rice, fuel and basic commodities the last month it burden for her family to eat three times a day.

In Capiz, Bayan led 1,000 people to a rally at the Roxas City gueststand. In Aklan, some 500 protesters led by Bayan and Kadamay marched from the ABL Sports Complex to the public plaza in the capital town of Kalibo.

Octopus effigy

In Negros Occidental, about 3,000 peace marchers ended up at the public plaza in Bacolod City. The rally carried the theme "Sangyan, oppression, politics, bastos, corruption must end. Ubos the Arroyo must leave."

The overall theme of anti-Arroyo dragon and burned in effigies like figure resembling Mr Arroyo wearing an Uncle Sam hat. The remedies of the protest represented five programs that were ranking the blood of the suffering people. Bayan Negros chair Asahel Enriquez said.

In Cebu City, Bayan said about 200 people marched to the Mabolo-ang to Sugbo, while Sandugo said 200 of its members held its own march at the presidential residence.

Bayan-Cebu chair Arnan Pagkalinawan said Mr Arroyo failed to fulfill her promises in the previous State of best in every table. More and more people have suffered from hunger because of the escalating prices of rice while the minimum wage of the workers remain low, he said.

'Lawful' appeal

Weekend from Camptonville Valley affiliated with the militant labor center Kilusang Mayo Uno staged a rally while the protest group Alliance Magsasakang Timog Katagalugan (Amta) in Calamba City.

A week sooner, dubbed "Sona 2008: Kinulitad to Sigaw Bahak ni Gloria" (Carnival of Gloria's Lies), was scheduled at 9 p.m.

Pamias called for a stop of the administration in turned Undignosus people's woes and de-

Red-banner protesters go green

By Jaymark Dagala

THE STRUCTURE of tribal thatch in Northern Luzon.

The effigy had a 10-foot papier-mâché image of the head of a random ship, MV Filipinas, wrested in the image of the SIS Princess of the Stars that sank off the coast of Southern Luzon month is on the height of Typhoon "Frank."

Old newspapers

The two-piece effigy was made of thatch over bamboo and recycled newspapers. It was finished in a week by the artists' group Ugat Lahi at a cost of about P18,000, according to Aldwin Kalingahan.

"Even making the effigy is affected by the rising prices. Art supplies now cost more. But we do not feel like it's a waste that we just burn it because it was made for that purpose," Salonga said.

Amid a drizzle, the militants decked Mr Arroyo's "Team" line in her speech.

Mr Arroyo's Sona at Batasan Pambansa when Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes decided to relay the President's message to thousands assembled before a police barricade on the closed eastbound lane of Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City.

"The President said she was worried for students. So Antonio, for students, for teachers. She said she wanted to help the poor," Reyes said.

To that, the crowd grew resounding replies "Oust!" "Boo!"

Hard sell for VAT

Reyes and party-list representatives of the alliance, who had walked out of the House of Representatives when Mr Arroyo delivered her Sona, listened to the President's message live on AM radio while they stayed with the protest throughout the afternoon.

"It is shocking that she said she's worried. It's incredible because her policies do not help uplift the situation of the poor and in fact worsen it. Her no-balance-sales push for the 12-percent value-added tax is also proving that people are opposed to it," Reyes said.

He called the message a hard sell for the tax that raises prices of basic goods at a time of double-digit inflation.

Earlier, militants in five-hour "People's Sona" on a bulletin-board stretch of Commonwealth Avenue, Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said figures used to boast their government's projection of a glowing economy.

"The economy is thriving because there is no project funds of modern agriculture, no strong industries... The government is a puppet of the United States," Ocampo said, standing on a truck before a crowd that the organizers said numbered 13,000.

Police, however, placed the estimate at 5,000.

FPJ's daughter

At the rally, Grace Poe, daughter of the late actor Fernando Poe Jr. feared the second and delivered strong words at the said Arroyo-appointed body.

"If FPJ (Poe) were still in the 2004 presidential election he had not been cheated, our Sona would not be like this... Let's not succumb to fear," Poe said, the fight is not over," Grace said in Filipino, reminding the audience of allegations that Mr Arroyo cheated in the election to beat the actor-son.

Tension on westbound lane

Tension momentarily erupted on the westbound lane of the avenue at around 2:45 p.m. when some 2,000 protesters belonging to Kilusang Mayo Uno, Alliance of Progressive Labor and Partido ng Manggagawa tried to assemble in front of St. Peter's Parish church.

Led by Alliance rep. Alan Montoya Jimenez, the protesters were able to pass through the first police blockade in front of the Capitol Estates 1 subdivision where groups allied with Bayan were holding their own version of the Sona.

Another policeman tried but failed to persuade the protesters from advancing onto the church by placing two dump trucks to block their path.

However, around 150 thatch-bearing policemen met Bayan's group a few meters from the church.

A violent confrontation between the policemen and the protesters was averted as Bayan had lobbied with Justice Supt. Rodelio Cruzada, the ground commander of the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) contingent.

CHR lawyers

Lawyers and field investigators from the Commission on Human Rights also monitored between the two groups. "We are here as part of our observation and to ensure that all the event to make sure no rights are violated," lawyer Gimarra Beatriz said.

Beatriz lamented that many policemen were not wearing nameplates.

The incident stalled the flow of vehicles going to and from Batasan. At around 3:45 p.m., the protesters dispersed.

Similarly, motorists in the inward that gathered on Commonwealth Avenue at 7:00.

He said more than 3,000 police personnel were deployed to form three layers of Crowd Dispersal Management teams at the Batasan Complex where the House is located.

Director Geary Barias, National Capital Region Police Office chief, said the rallies were generally peaceful.

A total of 7,000 police and military Civil Disturbance Management personnel were deployed in different parts of Metro Manila for the Sona.

Mendiola

Rallies in the day some 900 protesters attempted to march toward Mendiola Bridge in Manila but they were blocked by police men.

Members of Bukluran ng Manggagawa ng Pilipinas (BMP) and Sanlakas, who arrived at Morayta and Recto Avenue at 10:40 a.m., were barred by about 150 police personnel from going to the no-rally zone near Mendiola bridge.

About 30 tricycles from the Pedicabista ng Mamamayan sa Transportasyon joined the mass action to demand the removal of the VAT on petroleum products. The protesters peacefully dispersed at around 11:30 a.m. With reports by Jean Aliman H. Lopez and Helen Dizon

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OPINION

True state of the nation

YESTERDAY PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO delivered her eighth State of the Nation Address to Congress. A Pulse Asia survey showed that only 14 percent of the people said they expected the Sona to be truthful. What are the rest of the people to believe?

For starters, the people could read what government statistical agencies, foreign institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and surveys conducted by polling entities like the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia have to say about the economic and social situation of the nation.

EDITORIAL

Poverty—After eight years of Ms Arroyo, the Philippines remains a poor nation, with 50 percent of the population of 88.6 million rating themselves poor in March 2008, a 4 percent increase from the 46 percent of December 2007. There is, however, according to Mahar Mangahas of SWS, a downward trend in poverty from its most recent peak of 58 percent in June 2006.

Hunger—About 2.8 million families or 14.5 million people experienced involuntary hunger between April and June, the June 2008 SWS survey said. This figure is 4 percentage points higher than the 10-year average hunger rate of 12.1 percent. Severe hunger went up from 3.2 percent (about 570,000 families or 2.85 million people) to 4.2 percent (780,000 families or 3.6 million people).

Crime rate—The total crime volume in the first three months of the year went down by 6.44 percent compared to that in 2007, Senior Supt. Nicanor Bartolome, PNP spokesperson, said. But tell this to the one out of 10 families (11.5 percent) who had a member victimized in a street crime between June and December last year. An SWS survey published last February said that 18.5 percent of Filipino families lost property in a future break-in; 16.6 percent encountered pickpockets; 1.9 percent had their vehicle stolen; and 1.3 percent suffered physical violence.

Employment—The unemployment rate as of June 2008 was 8 percent and underemployment, 19.8 percent, according to the National Statistics Office. Because of the lack of good job opportunities here, every year hundreds of thousands of Filipinos leave to work abroad. The number of overseas Filipino workers who worked abroad at anytime during the period April to September 2006 reached 1.51 million, according to the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. Last year they remitted $14.4 billion—an amount that is helping to keep the economy afloat, but at a great social cost to their families and the nation.

Education—A recent Unesco report ranked the Philippines 74th in terms of the Education Development Index, falling below Mongolia, 61st; Vietnam, 65th; Indonesia, 56th; and China, 38th. The Philippines performed poorly in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study in 2003, ranking 41st in Science and 42nd in Math in a field of 45. The shortage of classrooms and teachers is becoming more serious every year.

Health—Despite the presence of a few modern medical centers in Metro Manila, health conditions in the Philippines remain among the poorest in East Asia, an ADB report said. The ADB estimated that there is only one doctor for every 0.609 people and only one hospital for every 808 patients. The country is graduating many doctors, nurses and caregivers every year, but they are being exported abroad like commodities.

Administration of justice—The wheels of justice grind exceedingly slow, and it is not unusual for even a high-profile case to take three to five years to resolve. As of 2006, pending court cases totaled about 800,000. The regional trial courts had the biggest backlog of 353,036 cases. But the Supreme Court and other judicial entities and officials are adding steps to speed up the dispensation of justice.

Corruption—It is in this area where the Philippines is No. 1 in the world. A World Bank study released in June said that the Philippines is now at the bottom of the list of East Asia's 10 largest economies, only above its cousin economies of corruptors, edging out Indonesia which scored the worst in the region in the 2007 survey. The same trend of slackening of control over corruption has been noted in reports of Transparency International, the World Bank and the Switzerland-based Institute for Management Development. The World Bank estimates that the Philippines loses more than $2 billion (about P98 billion) a year to corruption.

These representative figures should give us a general picture of the state of the nation today. They should provide a tentative balance to the picture painted by Ms Arroyo's yesterday. Should these figures make us happy or sad?

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Exorcising seven curses

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"THE CURSE IS COME UPON ME," WAILED Tennyson's "Lady of Shallot." That didn't come from today's lady ombudsman. Rather, this cry seems about the "fifth of seven curses" that plagues the Arroyo regime, Marcelo Mirasol, whose main bona fide is "blind loyalty to the President."

As impeachment prosecutor, Simeon Marcelo is nailed "four-by-fourth" to a withering cross-examination, without raising his voice. Here was a man who could "tread a dozen national lines, using flattery astride a horse," people felt. The Office of the Ombudsman under Marcelo grew into a four-path floating agency.

Today's Ombudsman is "going up in flames," hindering prosecutions claims. Hilja V. Benamso is "obstructing justice" in the murder of one of the victims cite of a Philippine president for plunder, has a daughter with a temper. How's that for a countermined agency? "Smoke?"

Marcelo resigned in November 2005 for "health reasons." He never recommended on presidents' speeches that the first 11 Ombudsmen leaned on him for special cases. The President named Merceditas Gutierrez as replacement in Marcelo's history. His brothers-in-law the First Gentleman's late school classmate.

"Even employees have elbow-sanded jobs," writes Tacio Lacson in "Be-ware, Filipino Employees, IGNORING "There's only one accolade the President can give himself: Merceditas—And that's the opposite another Marcelo."

Today, Ms Gutierrez "has nothing what her predecessor ... worked hard to establish: public trustworthiness for her credibility at the Ombudsman," claims a special Senate audit report.

She overturned decisions making and arbitrary dose regional ombudsmen into impotent mail clerks, wrote Atty. C. Bala. She blocks out information, specially those involving politicians. Marcelo's efforts to build alliances with citizens and cases checks groups against graft were left to wither.

Administrative Order 08 consigns her to speculation. This presents independence still. Only the Ombudsman Gen. Eddie Pamfilo, who admitted through incorporation 11 days before her deadline. Requirements like "three-year financial statements" were spiked.

Under Benjamin Abalos, the Comelec appointed at the contract—the days before it retired the bids and awards committee recommendation on April 23, 2003. "Leaving nothing" in the spit Filipino phrase for the pro-cooked.

"The illegal, improbable and lousy actions of the Commission ... cast serious doubts upon the said Smiley's ability and capacity to conduct automated elections," the Court said. "Truly, the guilt and acid of democracy—credible, orderly and peaceful elections—has been put in jeopardy by the illegal and grossly abusive acts of Comelec."

Customers relied on raw data kindly for the Comelec's Automated Election System in a conference abroad. Pillars in the world's most computer-literate country without a mainland? Still in the Filipino.

Impunity, however, emboldens. Mega Pacific is hasn't paid back a centavo. It stand unpaid, who testified before the Supreme Court for 11 full. The Comelec is billed P1.9 million yearly for storage of kaput computers.

"I won't resign," Abalos said. Did the Ombudsman's "gift of impunity" embolden Abalos? Three years later, he was to tell Secretary Rodolfo Noel in the broadband mess: "See, may 2004 election pa." Abalos was Gloria's campaign czar; at Mac ribbon veteran Rodolfo Lacuata, "Back off."

A no-frills dean of the Ateneo Address, defeated in a P95 million refurbished senator hall, until extensive "screen covers." These include mismanaged agriculture, deepening poverty and "Hello Garci" tapes. Ms Gutierrez's ombudsmanship

SIFE sows hope, unlike FSGO

SO I WRITE THIS COLUMN. THE PRESIDENT'S State of the Nation [Sona] will have to be delivered in a more mutedly emotional and somber way by her orders. A survey showed that less than half of the people believed that the proposed tax revenue to pay Sonas had been fulfilled. There's also the group of former senior officials of various administrations, including Mr Arroyo's, who formed the Former Senior Government Officials [FSGO]. The FSGO warned the foreign administration is "under siege" and that the country's "system of governance" including "robbing the nation of dignity, unity, hope and future." The grim premier states paint scenes obviously from the IMF survey showing that Filipinos are among the most pessimistic in the known sampling of all prevalent street folks.

* * *

On the occasion of the "maiden" Arroyo-appointed Chief Justice Renato Corona's Maralitang Masalimuot interview this is a baseless accusation. He said the Supreme Court put the "shitmare mail" to it when it dismissed Sen. Loren Legarda's electronic protest against Vice President Noli de Castro's election. The last letter to the Legarda protest came after two years and billions more in the Fernando Poe Jr.-Gloria Arroyo presidential contest, but "not a single ballot and brown envelope was opened," as Maralitang Masalimuot interviewer Korina Sanchez-Roxas REI was assured by President Arroyo," Maralitang said.

But if the FSGO aren't believe Maralitang, they should ask the bishops, some of whom are valid priests in the east American complex, about a much the bishops undertook three years ago on the estate of the 2001 election. The three high profile opportunists include who made that candy name of the country's Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, though not by the million margin she claims, but by about 500,000. The bishops' top secret study was circulated selectively but the FSGO surely got a copy... if it wanted to.

* * *

Increased hunger is not hard to appreciate as in Sulfon has shot up with the skyrocketing of oil and rice prices, from about 3 percent, to the tune of double digits. The Sona will have to be delivered in that increased, and the reality is that some Filipinos are experiencing more hunger now, which is why those whose God has given more should reach out to the poor. But as to the feeling of despair and hopelessness due to the problem of basic economic crisis, two people's minds, I don't see it. For one thing, as I said publicly in the last column, people are going up around the streets, which means more jobs. In the Global City in Fort Bonifacio alone, two five-star hotels are going up. Around the country, the government is completing many many ports, [government airports, highway networks, so, if 170 congressmen are supporting DIA, one big reason may be that they know all the projects going on in their locations.

* * *

Cecile Alvarez and I got a thought view of economic-side progress last Sunday when we interviewed an old ASEP program for the last Rep. and Mrs. Imelda Marcos on the Nation Center for Artists, six friend from UP days. He called me up during his brief visit to Manila to see his sisters with my views on the bishops' grand opinion of the 2001 election. The three high profile opportunists including

On Sona: Self-praise is for losers

THE STATE OF THE NATION Address is a general situation report by the President on the economic and political condition of the nation and tells of the accomplishments of the government in the preceding year. More than a prospect to the people, it is a report to Congress and the Judiciary—sort of a progress report to inform them of the accomplishments of the Executive and what supplementary legislation and judicial action may be needed to attain their joint objectives for the coming year.

Is the Sona credible? The answer to that question depends on one's political orientation, subscriber to or detractor of the administration. But to be fair, the Sona should be credible enough since the specific accomplishments it describes can be easily verified. What one puts it to ridicule is if certain aspects of what was promised in the previous Sona were not fulfilled. For the believers, the failure will be attributed to something beyond the control of the administration or circumstances beyond reasonable expectations. To the skeptics, however, who are generally anti-administration, no amount of excuses will do and no explanation is needed.

There is credible timeline as to time the specifics of accomplishments, but does it transcend the true state of the nation? So, it does not. The true state of the nation is also reflected by the prevailing negative and apathetic mood of the people toward the government as revealed in public surveys and how this can be dispelled and rectified. People expect to know why the government has failed to deliver on past promises considered of great import to them.

Also, people take seriously the controversial issues involving corruption in government as well as in the administration of justice as a whole. These are burning issues that have lured and befuddled the nation for so long and those must be answered, not ignored. Unless these issues are addressed in the Sona, the report of the President will be taken as nothing more than self-praise and window-dressing. By that lenient, Associated Football coach John Madden once said, "Self-praise is for losers. Always have class and be humble."

—CESAR R. DELOS REYES,
cesdlos@globelines.com.ph

Neri, 'silently suffering in shame,' should speak up

CONCERNED CITIZENS' (CITIZENS and taxpayers of our country can no longer stomach Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's appointment of so many unqualified people to very important and powerful positions that have a direct bearing on our country's integrity, pride and well-being.

Let's take as an example the appointment of Ricardo Nerí in the National Economic and Development Authority, the Department of Budget and Management, the Commission of Higher Education and now, the Social Security System.

Can Nerí, as a decent and religious person, continue to assume positions that are given to him by GMA just to keep him from telling all that he knows about the anomalous NBN-ZTE deal? Has Nerí no more sense of decency? Or is he absorbed in the fair that befell Rodolfo Lacuña would be his as well?

We are concerned for the health and safety of Nerí and believe his conscience can take only so much of the pressures weighing on him now as he is torn between keeping his decency and self-respect and keeping the truth to himself.

We appeal to Nerí in the event that pressure no longer take all the pressure and shame, please reveal all that you know and want to tell the Filipino people before you make any decision to free yourself from mental torture.

We know you are silently suffering in shame, we also know that GMA won't be around much longer to pressure you, threaten you and watch you. We were appalled by the GMSI and Venable fiascos of your qualifications but because of your role in irregular government deals, But you still have a way out, unlike GMA.

—EDMUN REYES,
1400 Rizal St., Makati City

Oil price rollback scripted, staged?

THE NEWS ABOUT THE P1.00 drop in diesel prices (Inquirer, 7/21/08) was not really a welcome development. On the Thursday or Friday before that, it was reported on CNN that not in the keynote) that there was a $5 drop in the price of oil per barrel, one of the biggest declines to date.

We anticipated a drop in the price of diesel and gasoline once the world price of oil per barrel went up but by $3 per liter. So the announcement on July 21 of a P1.50 rollback in the price of diesel, purportedly in response to the President's appeal, appeared to us to be staged. The increase seemed to be a move made by the oil firms in anticipation of the chance for a price cut due to the $5 drop in the per barrel price of oil.

How could one be blind government men and the keynote speech lost much substance of business importance to our already impoverished consumers? Please check the CNN report. It'll make a mistake, I apologize.

—LIZ TERESO REYES,
dodlesgirl2341@yahoo.com

Story on textbook critic malicious

I HOLD DAU THE NEWS (TODAY) feel "Charges Oil on textbook critic" (Inquirer, 7/18/08), written by Marlon Ramos, not only lacked fairness and objectivity but also clearly manifested the intention to destroy my name and reputation.

1. The case is sub judice, considering, it is still under trial or being heard by a court, isn't commenting publicly on cases sub judice on all fame in itself, which, in turn, may be a cause of action (for contempt of court proceedings)? Publicly discussing cases sub judice, especially criminal cases, constitutes interference with due process. How can I hope for a fair trial when the article virtually countered one of a crime I did not commit?

2. The writer played up the ill-fitting of the criminal case against me but glossed over the fact that the same case was dismissed for lack of merit less than a year after it was filed. Why didn't Ramos report about its dismissal in September 2007? Obviously, the intention of the entire article was to impress on the minds of the readers that I indeed committed a criminal offense.

3. Paragraph 7 of the statement ("The books, which had since been evaluated by the Department of Education (DepEd) and the National Book Development Board (NBDB), were said to pervade elementary schools.") created the impression that the books had passed two separate reviews conducted by the two bodies and had been cleared as thus they are now "said to pervade elementary schools"! There was no mention that the 500,000 bound copies of the books submitted to it for review to be of poor quality and that the DepEd, in fact, found all 12 to be so full of errors that Education Secretary Jesli Lapus immediately issued DepEd Order No. 30, directing the Bureau of Publishing House Inc. (BPH) in Hocquiz to stop selling them.

4. The reporter ended his article from "In its complaint, BPH said Co asked for P50,000 for each book he evaluated for a total of P600,000." When BPH did not give in to his demand, Co allegedly threatened the publishing firm that he would divulge the information about the errors filled books in the media." With these sentences, he left the impression that I committed the crime of extortion. Wasn't the prosecutor not quoted in the same story as saying "Go did not demand money"? Did he not say, clearly, in his resolution that the "respondent did not threaten to disseminate the errors if complainant did not make such demands (for money) but merely offered his services as editor/evaluator to PBSI for a fee"? Why did Ramos emphasize the negative and not the positive side of the statement?

5. The reporter knows the ethics and tribunalness of the free press, including the evil case, filed against me by Phoenix, Northern as the prosecutor's resolution is in the prosecutor's resolution is in the prosecutor's resolution dismissed the case against me nothing P3.3 million in damages for allegedly destroying its good name and reputation." Is this not proof that Ramos was somehow "persuaded, induced and inspired" by Phoenix to file it?

—ANTONIO CALIPAY GO,
academic supervisor,
Bachan School of Quezon City

I have no intention whatsoever to malign Go's integrity or make it appear that he is guilty of a crime. The article was prepped on the resolution of the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office endorsing PBSI's complaint against Go.

Now to his other claims and allegations:

1. Go said the case was sub judice as it was already being heard in court. As of July 22, the court had yet to schedule a hearing. And the sub judice rule applies only when a case is very notorious (very devoid of the case. In this case, I wrote only about the decision of the prosecutor. The article was a straight news story—not a commentary on the case.

2. The third sentence of my July 8 story referred to Sec. 3(b) of the prosecutor's initial ruling dismissing the case in 2007.

As to the third, fourth and fifth allegations, paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 and the reply on PBSI's 13.5-million refund claim, I merely reported Lapus' special report written by himself and Manila. (Inquirer, 6/30/08) These details were included to provide some background to my story.

—MARLON RAMOS,
reporter, Inquirer

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RP has enough means to build new railroads

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE NEWS STORY "Gov't scrambles to save fleet-blind," (Inquirer, 7/14/08)

The Philippines is a very rich country in terms of natural and human resources. Metals, natural energy, marine life and technical know-how are abundant and readily available in our country. It's just a matter of having a policy-oriented government that can mobilize our resources and enjoy those natural resources.

We don't need the Chinese to do our railroads. The United Kingdom, Australia, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dubai and several other countries import our engineers to build their railways. We must believe in our homegrown capabilities. We don't need Chinese money to line the pockets of the robbers in our government.

The government just has to intensify its campaign against corruption and I am sure we can build those metro railroad systems.

We don't need to act like beggars before Chinese government officials. If President Macapagal-Arroyo really means to lead this country well, she should show some decency and give us Filipinos some reasons to be proud. Yes, we can build our country a better future. With a little help from Malacañang.

My salute to the five good people in our government.

—RYAN C. JAKOSALEM,
(jamaudes@quantumbusiness.net)

Oil price rollback scripted, staged?

THE NEWS ABOUT THE P1.00 drop in diesel prices (Inquirer, 7/21/08) was not really a welcome development. On the Thursday or Friday before that, it was reported on CNN that not in the keynote) that there was a $5 drop in the price of oil per barrel, one of the biggest declines to date.

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How could one be blind government men and the keynote speech lost much substance of business importance to our already impoverished consumers? Please check the CNN report. It'll make a mistake, I apologize.

—LIZ TERESO REYES,
dodlesgirl2341@yahoo.com

Robbery in daylight, with a smile

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE news story "High fuel prices bring in 'other' service." (Inquirer, 7/8/08)

Commuters get it right that the crude policy for gasoline here three days a negligible and to some extent even insulting. We have been paying equally the gasoline prices in Manila and in the provinces, but the oil companies are using them to exercise their monopoly to the purge of perpetual oil price increases that heavily benefit only Shell, Caltex and Petron. It is as if these oil companies are robbing us in broad daylight, and with a smile on their faces.

Would it not be better if it were only the gas boys and the oil swindlers that are smiling but the oil consuming public as well? This can only happen when oil prices go down to the level before the Oil Deregulation Law was implemented. How that would put a smile on most Filipinos' faces.

—EMILIO LOPEZ,
public information officer,
Taguig-Pateros Mobility system
Khad-Herran Blvd.
Barangay 17, Legaspi City, Albay

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About those abortion stats

I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW THE MASS-informed figure of 473,000 annual abortions in the Philippines was arrived at. Abortion is illegal in the Philippines. Are there no official statistics on abortions that have been or are being collected by the medical industry and/or government health agencies?

Apart from this, abortion and population control advocates have been known to play fast and loose with statistics just to promote their agenda. Dr. Bernard Nathanson, a co-founder of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL)—a man who once ran the largest abortion facility in the Western world and is now pro-life—has written:

"How many deaths were we talking about when abortion was illegal? In NARAL, we usually emphasized the trauma of the individual case, use the mass statistics, but when we spoke of the latter it was always '5,000 to 10,000 deaths a year.' I confess that I knew the figures were totally false, and I suppose the others did too if they stopped to think of it. But in the 'morality' of our revolution, it was a useful fiction—a necessary lie. Figures, soberly assessed, so why go out of our way to correct it with honest statistics? The overriding concern was to get the laws eliminated, and anything within reason that had to be done was permissible."

Perhaps the figure of 473,000 has been, in a similar fashion, deeply made up.

Further examples can be found in an article that can be accessed at http://www.catholic.net/RCL/Apologetics/chapter13.html

—MICHAEL ANTHONY MAPA,
7 Trilby St., Bel-Air 3, Makati City

Point very well made

MARY SOCELS' COMMENTARY "THE MISSING voices of poor women" (Inquirer, 7/17/08) was a pleasure to read, making that very point that we as solidists have—just what we'd expect from the John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues.

I wish the Inquirer would find a more regular space for Socels.

—JOHN GEESER,
johnsreber@yahoo.com.ph

Across the NATION

3 kidnap victims freed in Zamboanga

ZAMBOANGA CITY—AFTER MORE THAN A week in captivity, three kidnap victims were freed in Albarkah town on Sunday night after payment of a "board and lodging fee."

Basilan police chief Senior Supt. Nelik Mustapaner said Bamlie Asdo, 31, and a passenger jeepney driver, William Samsurgado, 50, and an employee of the Pentabudong Agrifarm Multi-Purpose Cooperative Inc.; and her son, Michael, 13, were freed Sunday night in a resistance-family Alki, a village official of Building in Lantawan City.

Mustapaner said the three employees were handed over to the custody of Lantawan City Mayor Roderick Furigay, denied reports of ransom payments.

"We tapped some local leaders to deal with the kidnappers," Castro said.

Castro said the money was the initiative to resolve the kidnapping case "because the captives were taken in Basa, a barangay which is under the area of sovereign of Lantawan City."

Earlier, Col. Ruerico Guerrero, 14th Marine Brigade commander, said the kidnappers were demanding P2-million ransom for the liberty of the three captives.

But Nick Castro, executive assistant to

Mayor in G-string …

DIVINA Zubiaga-Lagdameo

MARIA Victoria Rhamida Alonso

REP Hilario Arroyo with wife Angelia

ATTORNEY-at-Law Ledesma

BABY Arroyo

SEN Loren Legarda

US Ambassador Kristie Kenney

"This is not cabaret," the dean from Quezon province said personally. "This is how we dress in our tribe."

For his efforts in leading the Baghdad cheerleading delegation, plus vegetables and corn, and achieving food self-sufficiency in three years, Cuanico was acknowledged by President Macapagal-Arroyo during her State …

"Fabulous, dude!" Ms Arroyo said. Cuanico, who was in the gallery, stood up to call his fanny.

For a few hours yesterday, reminiscing Filipinos tried to forget about the true state of the nation and watched on TV their favorite politicians with their significant others back in their "red carpet" moments.

In true show biz fashion, Ms Arroyo's eighth State before a joint session of Congress at the Batasang Pambansa in Quezon City because a much-awaited national fashion spectacle, complete with its share of victims and victors.

Leading the stellar lineup is the President herself in JC Rosendo's updated version of the Miuria Claus made of prim and dyed in bolivia using the subang plant's bark extract. Thankfully, word for the method dery were also dyed using organic bark extract.

"Sa Honduras weavers from tribes were the fabric," said Rosendo, one of Ms Arroyo's favorite designers, in xpin-Sona e-mail. "An heirloom pink woven brocade will hold the President's pochette. Handwoven wrapped around the shoulder[s] in place."

Ayuanta, Dave

Rosendo also did Ayuanta de Rossi-Lederman's draped silk chiffon tunic. For the afternoon event, the energetic former actress and wife of Rep. Jules Ledesma chose an unembellished teal number.

Dr Hotel Gardenia Gem alterations to her suit and chose to wearing a Swarovski necklace consisting of dangling white and yellow pearls—a wedding gift, she said, from husband Jules.

Showing a grey tones, actress Eiuna Zulueta, wife of Rep. Mikey Ledesma, skipped the red carpet altogether and went directly to the congressman's office as soon as she arrived.

Loren, Lani

But, Loren Legarda managed to generate her fair share of attention in Paul Cabral's black backless, off-the-shoulder silk crepe number with a stylized band embroidered peplum by embroiderer Jesus Lardizabal.

Legarda accessorized her look with a huge maroon pendant and a mother-of-pearl minaudiere (handbag) by Gerbetina, a high-end brand designed by former model Tina Marinduque Ocampo.

Next to Ryan Lanzol, Cabral probably made the biggest number of gowns and bearing in this year's Sona. He also did the terno of Deputy Speaker Aurelio Villaroel, Rep. Loren Legarda, Lani Mercado and Babe Aquino.

Mercado, wife of Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla, wore an empire-line terno with pleated detailing, dresses, mother of Rep. Rachel Arenas, agreed he white Hibaki silk terno with layers of French lace and silk organza from the hips down.

She almost forgot

Rodora Haresday, wife of House Speaker Prospero Nograles, almost forgot to have an outfit made for the Sona. She had a Sona gown drama-terno accented with shoulder-to-gown ruffles on the sides soaked for the occasion.

Haresday's wife of her favorite designers, Pedi Tiscio and Lanzol, were too busy attending to previous orders, she took her chances with Cabral. She seemed happy with the results.

"It slipped my mind since this is the first Sona where my husband is speaker," said Haresday, who wore Stefano jewelry consisting of a pair of ruby earrings, a brooch and a ring.

Rep. Cynthia Villar, wife of Senate president Manny Villar, wore a semi-beaded and embroidered kimono over a strapless lavender dress by Nolie Hosa.

Borrowed earrings

Apart from Revilla, Cabral also did the barong of Senators Aquino Estrada and Francis "Chiz" Escudero.

Escudero's wife Christine, however, wore Frederick Devaleri's Carolina-inspired terno made of duchess satin and embellished with geometric details and an overlay of black point d'esprit. The designer also did the gray and silver jusi and pike terno of Mitzi Enrile, wife of Sen. Ronaldo Zamora.

No one couldn't have worn a more stylized Maria Clara than Sen. Pia Cayetano, who donned a tailored, off-the-shoulder, Grecian-inspired olive dress by Rhu Unpairo. She spruced up the look with a floral-inspired multicolored necklace she bought in the Senate library and borrowed a pair of dangling earrings.

"I'm not really into jewelry," she said. "I was in such a hurry that I forgot to bring a pair of earrings with me. But no worry, I had to borrow earrings from my sister-in-law, Atty. JD Uy."

Popular designer

Audrey Tan-Zubiri, wife of Sen. Miguel Zubiri, one of the most photographed women in last year's Sona, again topped Inquirer in the feminine, a draped silk tulle number in deep turquoise with silver and crystal beading.

Yvonne Angeles, wife of Ayuso Rep. Jeremy Angeles and daughter-in-law of Gov. Edgardo Angeles, was also a repeat customer who came in Cabral's pale pink and white dolfin terno with a beaded skirt.

Lanzol also did the Sona outfits of more than a dozen congressional wives, including Nerissa Aguilos, Candy Biron, Zenaida Ermita and Jenny Rodriguez. He also remembered a other customer and Ilocos into his three-piece version of the Maria Clara for Rep. Jocelyn Limkaichong of Negros Oriental.

Fashion statement

Angela Arroyo, wife of Rep. Mikey Arroyo, held her own in Dennis Lucero's Thai silk terno with orchid motif, beadwork and handpainting, while Rep. Pimentel, wife of Rep. Crispin Pimentel, wore Jojie Lloren's modernized silk Maria Clara complete with bolero, palmado and kalbalahia, and a thin pair of diamond pearls.

Interviewers seemed confused to the end creper. Actresses Rep. Vilma Hontiveros-Baraquel, wearing a fuchsia terno of silk and organza, held a press conference in front of the Batasan entrance before the red carpet walk.

"Nala Sala, a single mother living with cancer, did my terno," said Hontiveros-Baraquel, a former broadcaster. "She used to work for Aurora Lopez, and we remember one of her former La Mancha employees." READ excerpt from Sona Ejercito Reyes

JDV, Erap shy away from GMA show

From page A1

At the Sona, I will just be one of 240 congressmen," De Venecia told the business over the weekend before he was to leave for Bangkok, Thailand, where he would speak at a United Nations conference on good governance.

"There in Bangkok, I will deliver a speech to the company of other world leaders to discuss problems of [nonsense] Asia," said De Venecia, who said he is a fellow in Ms Arroyo's previous annual reports to the nation, sharing the dais with the host and with the Senate president and highlights applauding her speeches.

Erap also a no-show

Another no-show at yesterday's joint session of Congress was former President Joseph Estrada, who had been invited to attend.

Referring to Mr Arroyo's Sona, De Venecia said she should be excited about the state of the nation.

"She needs to tell the truth as a first step to addressing the problems of the nation," he said.

Asked if Mr Arroyo would do just that, De Venecia said: "Her Sona's have been 3/3 percent factual and 50 percent exaggeration."

Who he?

Instead of De Venecia, the Speaker's own yesterday had an unfamiliar presenter in Rep. Prospero Nograles, who assumed the post of host De Venecia was supposed to be the scandal-ridden $329-million National Broadband Network deal with China.

From their remarks, it appeared De Venecia wasn't exactly terribly missed by his colleagues.

"Who?" Senate Deputy Majority Leader Reptrol Gonzalez II said in jest in a text message when caught for comment.

Nograles, for his part, said: "Sorry, but I didn't notice he was not on the floor."

"I found he flew to Thailand," Rep. Ignacio Arroyo said.

A total of 181 of the country's 240 congressmen showed up during the opening of the session.

Boycotting GMA

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño joked that De Venecia's absence could be "in solidarity" with the boycott of Sona by militant lawmakers. Besides Casiño, Representatives Satur Ocampo, Liza Maza, Lisa Regina and Rafael Mariano didn't show up to the affair.

"We refuse to walk the extravagant red carpet in Congress and listen to the lies of an illegitimate president," Casiño said.

Instead of attending the Sona event, Gonzalez instead opened a sumptuous lunch at the Senate office of his son, Sen. Reggie Estrada.

Others at the sumptuous lunch catered by a Brazilian-themed grill restaurant were Senate President Manny Villar and Senators Alan Peter Cayetano, Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Loren Legarda.

The senators who did not attend the Sona were Estrada, Pimentel, Cayetano, Jamby Madrigal, Pedro Lacson, Juan Ponce Enrile, Ramon Revilla Jr. and Senator Antonio "Sonny" Trillanes IV, detention, facing coup d'etat charges.

Band-aid solution

Estrada slammed Malacañang's policy of distributing doles to poor families to help them cope with the current economic crisis.

"The subsidies are not only wrong; they are very, very wrong. I will not even think of spending billions for three hundred cabinetmen," Estrada told reporters.

He said the nation's dire social-related economic difficulties during his term but he focused on long-term solutions, such as increased governmental spending for agriculture infrastructure and providing farmers with necessary seed productivity.

"Let's say we have P1 billion. How can you be sure that all of these will go to the poor?" he said. "From the third to the last or recipient. How will you prepare to audit this? You'd count these one by one? How many poor people do we have?"

Estrada said doles were fine in times of calamity, but not as a general policy.

No choice pet

Estrada said he would still make up his mind on whom to endorse among 44 potential presidential candidates in 2010—Villar, Legarda, Lacson, Senators Mar Roxas and Francis Escudero and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay.

Estrada said Ms Arroyo was doomed to see her public trust ratings go down further because of her supposed anti-poor efforts.

"The opinion of the people will not change. She only did the reduce but rise, she even added more," he said.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PHILIPPINE CONGRESS

We, the undersigned concerned NGOs/POs/stakeholders/residents and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, bound by a common goal to preserve the blessings of democracy, hereby manifest and register our **strong opposition** to any move that would pave the way for the resetting of the ARMM polls which are scheduled on August 11, 2008, for the following reasons, to wit:

a. Both the expiration of the terms of office of the officials elected during the 2005 ARMM elections and the beginning of the terms of office of those that will be elected to office this August 11, 2008 elections are fixed, in its legal contemplation by Section 7 of Article VII of R.A. 9054, the Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao to be on **September 30, 2008**.

   Any act therefore that would alter or change this date (September 30) is, in effect an amendment to the law (R.A. 9054), and any amendment to it, pursuant to section 3 of Article XVII thereof must, in order for it to have a legal effect be submitted for approval to the people of the region in a plebiscite called for the purpose, which shall be held not earlier than sixty (60) days nor later than ninety (90) days after its approval;

   Thus, considering that we have barely few days before the scheduled election, we submit that amendment of the said law at this point, is not legally tenable and technically feasible;

b. The holding of elections as scheduled will not, in any way disrupt the on-going peace talks between the GRP and the MILF, as election is not an instrument of war that breaches the atmosphere of peace but a healthy indication that democracy reigns in our Region;

c. Substantial public funds are already expended for the purpose of the elections and it would be a senseless spending for the government, in the face of economic turmoil being experienced by our country, to appropriate funds again for the same purpose.

d. The constituents of the Autonomous Region will be deprived of their rights to be involved and consulted should there be an immediate change/amendment of any provision of existing organic act/law without following the legal principle of due process.

LET US UNITE!

PUSH THROUGH WITH THE AUGUST 11, 2008 ARMM ELECTIONS!

FABIOLA K. CALAMATA
President
LANAO Muslim Reformers (LMP)

ALIMAM BANDARA
Tangky Lipa
TIMUAY JUSTICE & GOVERNANCE

YUSOPH I. MOHAMMAD
President
MINSUPALA Foundation, Inc.

MOHAMMAD M. RADIAMODA
President
Maranao Youth Alliance

GUIALOSON A. MAMIDGKAT, MPS
President and Advocacy Coordinator for ARMM
PICE Inc.--Cotabato City & Maguindanao

DORIS ANNE S. ANDUM
Secretary
Indigenous People's Resource Center of the ARMM

SATURNINO CUYONG, JR.
Chairperson
Teduray Lumbangan Youth and Student Association (TLYSA)

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Vice-Chairman
Kabu-Kabu Integrated Farmers MPC
Upi, Shariff Kabunsuan

RODNEY N. APUNA
Chairman
PHOENIX MPC
San Jose South Upi, Maguindanao

NORMA L. INTOY
Secretary
Integration of Upi Highlanders MPC
Poblacion, Upi, Shariff Kabunsuan

TUCAL B. MAGUINDANAO
Chairman
SOLID MULTI PURPOSE COOP
Bagayan, Marantao, Lanao del Sur

SINGGON M. ANDULLAH
President
Al Haq Foundation, Inc.
Maguindanao

NEWS

'Igme' leaves 4 dead, 5 missing in North

TYPHOON "IGME" LEFT FOUR PEOPLE DEAD WITH FIVE others reported missing and caused widespread floods, landslides and power outages in the Ilocos and Cordillera regions, the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) said yesterday.

The storm brushed past the northern tip of the country over the weekend before slamming yesterday into eastern Taiwan.

The NDCC said Ilocos-born Dale Malaggaya of Malitong, one of the reported victims of Igme, drowned as he and his mother, Gemma, 34, tried to cross the swollen Abra River at around 7 p.m. on Sunday. Gemma was swept away and remains missing.

Arnie Bribeng, 12, died while her grandmother, Sibu, 55, was injured after they were struck by lightning in Malitong also on Sunday.

Ismael Gaybor, 52, was buried alive in a landslide, also in Malitong.

In Ilocos Norte, Lucio Bonsalod, 58, drowned in Paniqui-tuan, the NDCC said.

The NDCC noted that Army Hida, 26, of Piddig, Ilocos Norte; Edwin Montemayor, 27, of La Union, and Sebastian Ilidi de la Cruz and Roger Ulloa, both 27, of Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, were missing.

Nearly 10,000 people, mostly in Pangasinan town, were affected by the flashfloods that hit Ilocos Norte and Ilocos Sur.

Floodwaters submerged almost 2,000 houses in the towns of Pasuquin, Piddig, Solsona, Bacarra, Pagudpud and Bangui in Ilocos Norte, the NDCC said.

In the Cordilleras, 470 persons or 94 families were evacuated or moved to higher ground because of floodwaters.

Strong rains fell on Baguio City on Sunday, but the rains stopped yesterday.

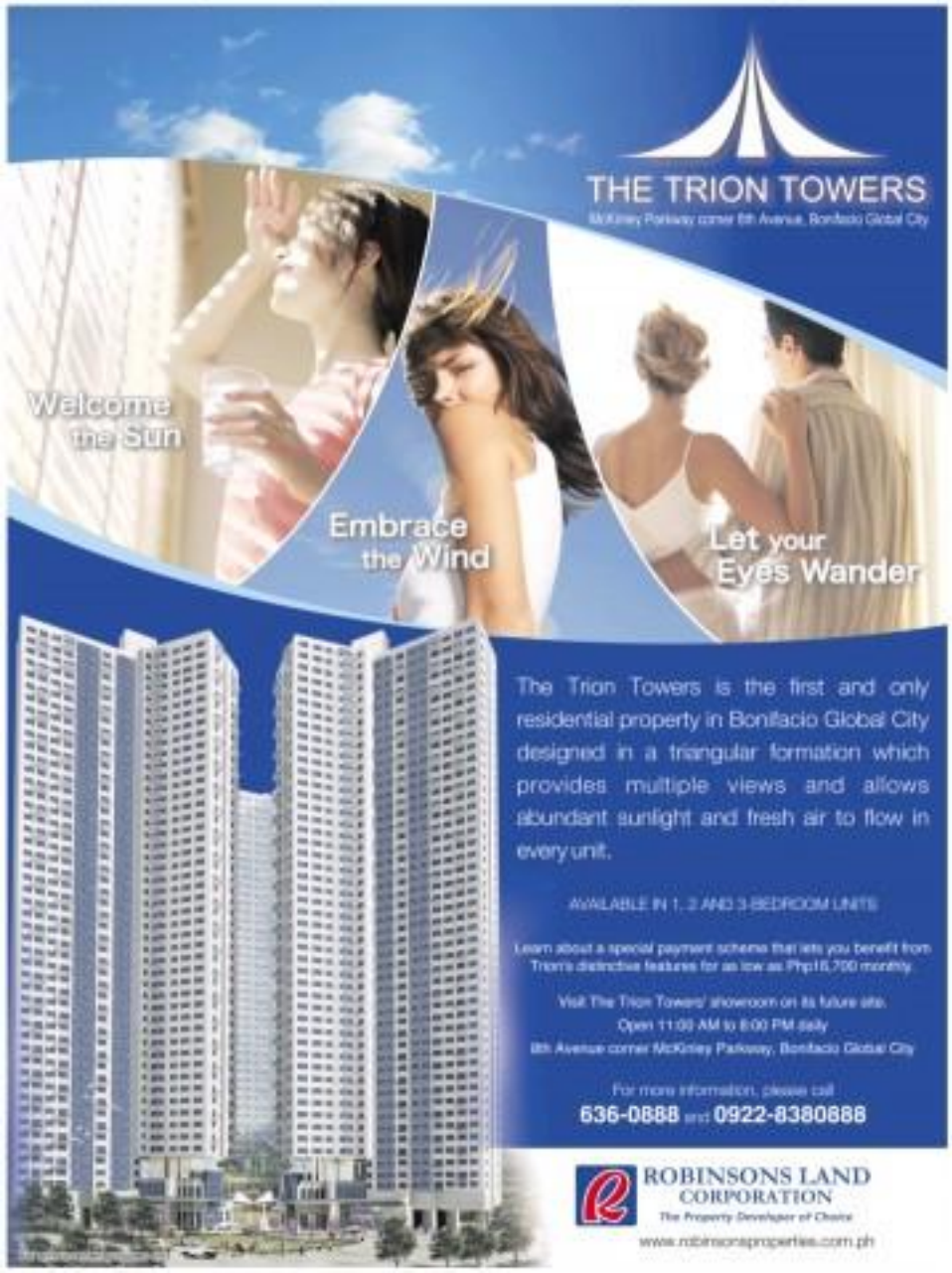
A minor landslide hit a section of Kennon Road on Sunday, but this major route to Baguio was opened to traffic yesterday. Minor landslides were also reported in the Baguio villages of Dontogan, Green Valley and Quezon Hill.

The Halsema Highway, the route to the vegetable farms of Benguet and Mountain Province, remained open.

The rains increased water levels at Ambuklao and Binga dams, but only one gate of Ambuklao was opened to release excess water.

The NDCC said storm signal No. 3 had been raised over the Batanes group of islands while signal No. 2 was hoisted over Cagayan and the Babuyan Group of Islands, northern Cagayan, Apayao and Ilocos Norte.

Signal No. 1 was raised over the rest of Cagayan, Kalinga, Abra, Mt. Province, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Zambales and Bataan. Nikko Dizon, Jocelyn Uy, with reports from Vincent Cabreza, Aries Cutchuba and Rolando Estolo-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon



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Dangling live wire kills boy

By Allison W. Lopez

A 9-YEAR-OLD BOY WAS ELECTROCUTED while his brother was hurt after they came into contact with a live wire as they were playing in Port Area, Manila, on Sunday.

Bryan Rivera was declared dead on arrival at the Tondo Medical Center at around 12:30 p.m. on Tacoma Street, Gate 7, South Harbor, Port Area.

Ryan Rivera was confined at the Hospital ng Maynila because of third-degree burns all over his body.

His brother Rafael, 8, is still being treated in the same hospital.

PO2 Ronie Cauco of the Manila Police District homicide division said the two boys were last seen playing with other children at around 12:30 p.m. on Tacoma Street, Gate 7, South Harbor, Port Area.

About 20 minutes later, however, their playmates found the victims screaming and unconscious writhing on the ground, with a wire hanging from an electrical post wrapped around them.

Did you know

Princess files counteraffidavit

By Beverly T. Nadenlad

A BOMBA ACTRESS ACCUSED of cultivating her homemaid yesterday filed her counteraffidavit in the Pasig Regional Trial Court.

Princess Revilla, Rebecca Bautista Crisologo in real life, however, failed to submit one of the seven witnesses in her counteraffidavit despite a five-day extension granted to her by the Pasig Prosecutor's Office last week.

This drew a protest from the prosecution who said the court should have strictly implemented the deadline it earlier imposed on Revilla's camp.

Irene Magsig, the lawyer of Revilla's alleged victim, Rosalyn Arena, told the Inquirer that Revilla should have submitted an attachment to the affidavits of her two other maids, Cleofe Salcedo and Marissa Machella, whom she was presenting as her witnesses.

Revilla's lawyers told the court they would submit Machella's affidavit on Aug. 4.

"We hope there will be no preferential treatment [given to the other camp] on the basis of what happened in today's hearing," said Roxanne Bonilla, Arena's other lawyer.

Revilla's brother is acknowledged senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr.

"We have faith that the prosecutor will maintain neutrality in the face of the powerful personalities involved as well as the prestigious law firm behind them," said Bonilla.

MetroBriefs

Security guard found dead in hardware store

A SECURITY guard was found dead in a hardware store in Muntinlupa City before dawn yesterday. The body of Nestor Lumpin, 29, was discovered by his co-worker, Jonathan Ybal, at Top Best Hardware on Sierra Madre Street, Barangay Highway Hills. Ybal told police that when he reported for work at 6:30 a.m. yesterday, no one came to the door despite his repeated knocks. With the help of another employee, Ybal said they managed to open the store and found the guard dead, with the television set still on. They brought the victim to the hospital but doctors pronounced the latter dead on arrival. The police said the guard probably died of natural causes because there were no signs of a struggle in the warehouse or any wound on the victim's body.

Wendy T. Rafalsal

NBI agents seize fake skin care products

AGENTS of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized about 2,000 pieces of fake whitening soaps and cream during a raid on a firm's offices and stalls in Binondo, Manila, last week. NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division chief Ellen Meñanes Jr. said they found counterfeit Alan Crane Device products on July 22 in the offices of Taiko General Merchandise at Dan Mariano Building on Ongsiu Street. A raid on the company's stalls in Divisoria Mall also yielded more of the fake products. All in all, the NBI agents seized 1,800 pieces of counterfeit soaps and cream worth about P111,200. The raids were conducted on the strength of a search warrant issued by Judge Antonio Eugenio of the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 24 after the manufacturers of Jacci and Swiss Jacci filed a complaint for help. Charges of violating Republic Act No. 8293 (trademark infringement) were being mulled against the owner of the establishment where the fake skin care products were seized.

Allison W. Lopez

The WORLD

Edna Lawrence B. Olonan

2 bomb attacks in Istanbul square kill 17

ISTANBUL, TURKEY—TURKISH POLICE detained three teenagers in connection with two bomb blasts in a packed Istanbul square, a newspaper reported on Monday. The blasts killed 17 people and injured more than 150 in the deadliest attack here in almost five years.

The Milliyet newspaper reported on its website that three women, aged 16 and 17, were found late on Sunday in the basement of an apartment close to the explosions following a tip from residents.

The paper reported the three claimed they hid in the basement because they were frightened from the explosions.

The city's governor called it a "terror attack" but officials did not blame any specific group and no one immediately claimed responsibility. CNN-Turk television, citing security sources, said police suspect Kurdish rebels may be behind it because intelligence reports had suggested the rebels were planning a bombing campaign in Turkish cities.

"There is no doubt that this is a terror attack," Gov. Muammer Guler told reporters.

The first bomb went off in the residential neighborhood of Gungoren in a busy square closed to traffic where people congregate at night, witnesses said. A number of people rushed over to help the victims when a second, more powerful blast hit—from by about 10 minutes after the first.

Many of the casualties were from the second explosion, witnesses said.

"The fact that there was a crowd in the area has increased the number of casualties," the governor said. The governor's office said 154 people were injured. Of those, 15 were in critical condition, a government official at the scene said.

An Associated Press reporter who arrived close by after the explosions saw at least 12 people lying on the ground. Bodies, glass, clothing, shop mannequins and other debris were strewn on the ground and bomb squads in white coveralls were inspecting the scene.

Many of the injured waited for medical assistance, their faces and bodies covered with blood. Several people who appeared seriously wounded were wrapped in blankets and carried in ambulances rushing away the site of the blasts.

"The first explosion was in a telephone booth," said Huseyin Secmek, who owns a nearby shoe shop. "The second explosion was some 40 meters away."

"The first explosion was not very strong," Secmek added. "Several people came to see what was going on. That's when the second explosion occurred and it injured many onlookers." AP

WORLDBRIEFS

3 female suicide bombers kill 25 pilgrims in Baghdad

BAGHDAD—Three suicide bombers, believed to be women, killed 25 Shiite pilgrims on Monday as they headed to a holy shrine in Baghdad for a major religious ceremony that has been marred by bloodshed in the past. Among the dead were women and children, security and hospital officials told AFP, adding that about 70 other people were wounded in the attacks. The bombers struck in the Karrada district of central Baghdad as the pilgrims were making their way on foot towards Kadhimiya on the north of the Iraqi capital, site of Tuesday's Shiite festival. AP

Cambodia, Thailand open talks on temple standoff

SIEM REAP, Cambodia—Foreign ministers from Cambodia and Thailand held front-talks on Monday to resolve a nearly two-week military standoff close to an ancient temple that has raised tensions in the region. Thousands of soldiers have been deployed since July 15 to a small patch of land around the 11th century Preah Vihear temple, which sits on a mountaintop overlooking the Cambodian jungle. The name of the Khmer temple—belong to Cambodia, but the most practical entrance begins on the foot of a mountain in Thailand, and both sides claim control of the surrounding territory. Neither country expects a resolution to the conflict to come on Monday. But they hope reports will be able to hammer out details on proposals for the border, before the ministers meet again later in the day, officials said. "The foreign ministers will raise only their main policies, but issues regarding the border and troops need to be discussed in more detail and that will require work by different committees," Cambodia's government spokesperson Khieu Kanharith told AFP. "Meeting face to face is better than not meeting each other," he added. AFP

India antiterror squads carry out raids after bombings

AHMEDABAD, India—Police raided the home of an American citizen in Mumbai, India's financial capital, and seized a computer from what is a man claiming responsibility for bombings that killed 45 people in western India was believed to have been sent, officials said on Monday. The 46-year-old American has not been detained, said Kiran Bhaskaran, a police officer involved in the raid. He would not say if he was a suspect. Antiterror police also arrested an undisclosed figure in Ahmedabad with several ties to a banned Muslim group and name determining whether he had any connection to the weekend attack in the city, said deputy police chief Ashish Bhatia. At least 45 bombs exploded through Ahmedabad around dusk on Saturday, killing 45 people and wounding 161 others, said state health Minister Jaynarayan Vyas. It was the second series of blasts in India in two days. An Islamic militant group took credit for the Ahmedabad attack. "In the name of Allah the Indian Mujahideen strike again! Do what ever you can, within five minutes from now, feel the terror of Death!" said a text mail from the group sent to several Indian television stations minutes before the blasts began. The e-mail's subject line said: "Mail this minutes for the revenge of Ispanal," an apparent reference to 2002 riots in the western state that left 1,200 people, mostly Muslims, dead. The historic city of Ahmedabad was the scene of much of the 2002 violence. AP

Nato says its troops killed 2 children in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan—Nato says its troops have killed two children in southern Afghanistan by opening fire on a car that they feared was about to attack their convoy. The alliance said in a statement issued on Monday that the troops opened fire on the car in Kandahar province after its driver ignored repeated signals to keep its distance. Afghan and US officials have urged international troops to avoid civilian casualties, which threaten to undermine support for the President Hamid Karzai and the presence of foreign forces. AP

Suspected US missile strike kills 6 in Pakistan

MIRAM, Pakistan—A suspected US missile strike on a Pakistani madrasa killed six people, including foreigners, on Monday, in tribal lands regarded as an al-Qaeda and Taliban hotbed, intelligence officials said. The target of the pre-dawn attack was a house close to a madrasa used by militants near Azam Warsak village, in the South Waziristan region bordering Afghanistan. Reuters

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Nadal rules Rogers Cup, nears No. 1 /A25

SPORTS

Editor Tuddyvic S. Maluntras Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

Mayor Lim eyed to probe attack on FEU's Baracael

By Inquirer Sports

NO LESS THAN MANILA MAYOR ALFREDO LIM WILL BE REQUESTED BY the UAAP board to spearhead the investigation of the shooting which nearly claimed the life of the Eastern University ranger Manuel "Mac" Baracael.

A ranking official of a member university in the UAAP told the Inquirer yesterday that the move to seek Lim's help is supported by majority of the member schools.

"The UAAP wants to get to the root of the problem," said the source who asked not be named. "Everybody also thinks the crime happened in Manila."

Lim, a no-nonsense police general and MM chief before becoming a senator and then mayor of Manila, is an alumnus of rival De La Salle University and the UAAP board remains in dark," the board said.

"We condemn the attack. We enjoin everyone to assist in the search for the truth."

Police Officer 1 Berwin Bernal, the lead investigator in the case, told the Inquirer last night that the motive for the attack on Baracael remained unknown.

Bernal said they have interviewed Baracael, Eastern's delegate.

"The victim has no idea who shot him or what the motive of the attack might have been," said Bernal.

Four known sources, including an FEU official, who all spoke on condition of anonymity, have claimed that the university may be related to basketball games.

But Bernal said there is "no solid evidence yet" to link the incident to such a motive.

Police did not disclose an armed man's house for the investigation, saying it would depend on the cooperation of the victim and the people with knowledge of the incident.

"It's hard to say values can you solve the crime because a light area, our utilities are limits," Bernal said.

The police officer also said he is planning to request for a copy of the security video of Philcoat Bank, which may have recorded the shooting.

POLICE say Mac Baracael (right) has no idea who shot him.

UAAP may settle Warriors' protest today

By Jaroslaw W. Poyo

THE UAAP IS HOPING FOR A SWIFT resolution of the University of the East protest regarding "major technical errors committed" in the final three minutes of its recent semi-s basketball match against De La Salle University.

Commissioner Dale Naraza is expected to issue a decision today on what UE claimed was a "clear violation of the Philippine rules on the 24-second shot clock rule" in the game the Warriors lost to the Taramans, 71-69 last Saturday.

"I'll study it," said Naraza after UE formalized the protest Sunday. "I met with the officials concerned."

The violation, UE claimed, allowed FEU to score a basket through Marlon Pascual, even "with the game clock already at 0:00, the shot clock flashed at zero and the buzzer sounded."

Adolfo, according to the protest, even "did an extra spin move to be able to make the shot" and refers "the ball entered the ring, the time flashed on the game clock was 0:00 or zero seconds before the 24-second shot clock info."

The lapses denied UE a chance "to gain momentum" and "altered the result of the game," the UE letter noted.

Sports Illustrated tips Tañamor to win silver

By Cedrik F. Tejon

HARD Tañamor: Gold to Cinderella?

RESPECTED AMERICAN sports publication Sports Illustrated has tipped Filipino boxer Harry Tañamor to capture the light flyweight silver medal in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

In its Olympic preview feature, dated July 28 and released online at www.sportsillustrated.cnn.com, the magazine, which has 23 million readers in the United States alone, also pinpointed 2002 world champion Zou Shiming of China to bag the gold in the 48-kg division.

Shiming, the reigning Asian Games gold medalist and a bronze winner in the 2004 Athens Games, beat Tañamor convincingly, 15-3, in the finals of the world championships in Chicago last year.

The silver-medal Tañamor, who also competed in the Athens Olympics, is qualified for the Beijing Games.

Manny Lopez, president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines, yesterday said the SI projection is a "good psychological boost" for Tañamor.

"We're very flattered," Lopez told the Inquirer. "But Harry knows too well that nothing is won until the gold."

Lopez said Tañamor, who the giant-killer sports on Aug. 13, is undergoing intensive training and is together with the coaching staff, is focusing on light strategies.

Sports Illustrated also predicted Patrick Barrett of Ireland and Alexei Sworlov of Tajikistan to win the bronze medals in Tañamor's division.

9 days to the 29th Summer Olympics

Beijing 2008

ProGear Golf

RAINY DAY SALE

Team Philippines leaves for Beijing in batches

By Cedrik F. Tejon

ELEVEN ATHLETES, LED BY TOP MEDAL hope Harry Tañamor, will be part of the main bunch of athletes and officials of Team Philippines that leaves for the Beijing Olympics on Aug. 3.

The 2008 Olympic Games opens on Aug. 8 in the Beijing Olympic Stadium.

Joining boxer Tañamor in the nag. 0 batch are Mansueto Velasco and Mercy Siagrad of athletics, divers Hinida Mae Heva and Yeoh Nyan Bibiyan, swimmers Daniel Coakley Ryan Stein Andrejic, Miguel Molina, James Webb and Jessa Dianne Simora, and weightlifter Nestlyn Diaz.

Chef de Mission and Beached Rep. Monico Puentevella as well as Olympic attaché Jerson Mangaoil will lead the 27-man NF group that will board a Philippine Airlines flight to the Chinese capital.

World boxing champion Manny Pacquiao, who has been appointed special Olympic envoy and flag bearer during the opening ceremonies, and the wife Jinkee will join President Macapagal-Arroyo, First Gentleman José Miguel "Mike" Arroyo, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr., Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez and Sen. Gringo Honasan in the group of officials set to leave for Beijing on Aug.7.

Archer Mark Javier and shooter Eric Ang are leaving that Thursday together with coaches Jaime Dimalanta and Jennifer Chua, while taekwondo bets Monic Antonette Rivera and Brandon Ko will depart on Aug. 11 along with coaches Rod Fuentes and Kim Hong Sik.

Also part of the batch are coaches Patricio Gaspi, Joseph Sy, Arni Enrique Torres, Diong Delos, Jason Calaunig, Carlos Renato, Ramon Solis, pests Gilbert Jose "Jess" Remonario, Ricardo Ytoy, Mark Joseph, Jovers Wanbe Comsti, Alejandro Pineda and Orven Orbito.

The first group that will fly to Beijing this morning is a number of Philippine Olympic Committee treasurer Adrian Cristobal, Athletes' representative Efraim Miranda, Manolo and administrative assistant Eleanor dela Peña. They will attend the delegations' registration meeting tomorrow.

The 40-odd-man party will join in the flag-raising ritual along with several other nations on Aug. 4.

The four Filipinos who are vying solos in rumba, a special event in the Olympics, will join Aug. Jovica Gerardo, Meyrdles, and Arlo Pena during the ceremonies to be supervised by athletes Village Mayor Chua Hoi.

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NISSAN

Hoya fight looms large

Pacman set to meet Arum

By Ray Lustre

MIGUEL COTTO IS OUT, BUT SO IS HIS CONQUEROR, ANTONIO MARGARITO, Oscar Bluewonther Jr. is retired and Delio Trinidad won't fight before 144 pounds.

Thus the chances of Manny Pacquiao emerging as Oscar De La Hoya's final opponent in December loom bright.

And the megabuck fight could be it, unless De La Hoya's 10 days," Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer fanned to the Filipino boxing hopes by fighting.

Newly crowned IBFA welterweight champion Margarito is out of the equation because De La Hoya, a 10-time world champion in six divisions, has indicated in previous reports that he won't fight a fellow Mexican for his farewell ring performances.

Pacquiao, on the other hand, is willing to tangle with De La Hoya in a bout that is certain to rake in millions for the two extremely popular fighters.

The Filipino super star, who was scheduled to leave for Los Angeles last night, will meet with Top Rank promoter Bob Arum and by down the road-

PACQUIAO: Reach earns $ 13M purse.

some for the prospective De La Hoya fight.

The De La Hoya camp has initially offered Pacquiao $3,000,000, but the WBC lightweight champion isn't expected to bite since he had already announced that he wants an equal purse with De La Hoya, apart from a share of the pay-per-view income.

Another issue to be settled is the weight with which they are going to fight.

Team Pacquiao wants De La Hoya to go down to 147 pounds while De La Hoya is inclined to fight at 150 or over.

Celebrated trainer Freddie Roach, for his part, wants Pacquiao to recover to less than $13,000,000 in his bid to secure a fifth world title in as many divisions.

If the fight with De La Hoya pushes through, Pacquiao promises to make the at least 11 weeks in the United States and be in his best fighting form ever.

No ripple from aero gymnasts in World Series

By Jam Navarro

LAS VEGAS—CHARISS MONIQUE MADE A good impression in his debut while Christine Lotter and Ilora Bi produced a respectable performance in the mixed pairs event yesterday in the FIG Aerobic Gymnastics World Series at the Luxora Lake Hotel.

The Filipino aero gymnasts, however, failed to make an impact in the finals of their events.

Rojas and Jamyr, Mendez took some time to get into the groove and completed his routine with 15.8 points, which the national coaches said was not bad for a first-timer on the international arena.

Perez and Ilo performed creditably against a tough field that included aero gymnastic star Gregory Alaux of France and his sister Charlelle and a host of formidable opponents from Italy, China, Brazil and Bulgaria.

Matching her impressive art in the individual women's category, Perez combined with Ilo for 13.95 points in the mixed pairs.

"The bronze is from our silver here," said Perez. "I'm pretty sure that next time, the Philippines will contend in the medal round."

Like Mendez, Perez bowed out of contention in the individual women's category after landing 13th overall with 16.05 points.

Alejandro Mendelchut, hampered by a pulled hamstring, also failed to make it to the individual male event with a 14.20 point score.

Perez consoled herself by beating United States bets Marlaine Boutt (13.65 points) and Jennifer Hupp (14.85).

Assistant coach Marites Ignacio said he got hold of magnificent of every detailed assessment on each routine of the aero-gymnasts.

Ignacio said the photos, which have eight shots on each of the 11 frames, will point out the flawed that players in a precise manner.

"We don't have that kind of approach back home," said Ibrin. "Here, we will learn a lot."

"We will learn to skilled and fully developed team in the coming tournaments," added Ibrin, who also served as team leader of the 10 team basketball by the Philippine Sports Commission.

BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES
Players and team officials brave the downpour Rolls and Dionquares Urdaneta pull the rain cover on the pitch of the Rizal Memorial Baseball Stadium after heavy downpour forced organizers to halt Sunday's deciding game of Baseball Philippines' Series 2 championship series. The game will be resumed on Sunday with the Rolls leading the Urdaneta, 4-2, after three innings.

AJ Banal and Cebu's secret nightmare

THEN ALLOWED TO DAYS OF SLEEPLESS JOHN Ismail that the celebrated young boxer would be the immediate heir to the country's boxing superhero Manny Pacquiao.

That was before the stumbling nightmare inside the New Cebu Coliseum last Saturday.

Sure, all those who sank with AJ in the 10th round of his fight for an interim world title against an unbeatable Dominican world kid even hunter a gasp if Ismail could still qualify as long boy or around face of the ghost Pacquiao.

There were perplexing disbelief after Ismail, who took control of the fight early and was threatening to dominate, removed and sank senseless by the sting punch in the 10th round.

His handlers, led by the Villarosa brothers Richmond and Willie, were hollering and clowning ordering AJ to spring back, rise, get up as referee Raul Cano Jr. tolled the 10 count.

* * *

No way Ismail and luminous like a busted-rate luxury international round as AJ had boomed before the sudden chaos. Seemingly footage, the poor fighter was pitifully reduced to a damp paper bear.

The lethal clip to ultimate slumberin was an tragic Ismail collapsed a second time on his way to the chapel.

It's easy to say that, more than from sheer exhaustion, AJ sank again upon realizing the great mistake of his career who came shooting to the referees and ended up damaged victim of the boxing disaster.

* * *

Ismail, for sure, must've felt like that dumb chip captain who foolishly drove the titanic against a killer iceberg out there in the ocean—and took weeks up to realize it was too late.

Indeed, the Ismail fight for the Wild interim super flyweight title opened like a daydream. He had a perfect start, was landing

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

crisp combinations as he followed orders from his corner.

Ismail was accompanying perfectly against the charging Rafael Concepcion who was labeled El Terrible or Baby Bull.

* * *

But some moments in the first half of the bout, Banal indeed appeared like he just needed to go through the formalities of a coronation.

He looked overqualified to finish off an outmatched foe.

Actually, the bout had started to shape up like a puzzling picnic for the celebrated Banal—until Concepcion gallantly waded through the hail of punches and clung a couple of big blows to the body.

This came in the third round.

So, the Pamanmanan did not hit the jackpot, but that all-revealing incident in the third opened great possibilities of a hard-won stoppage.

* * *

It would indeed not be easy because, as Concepcion explained after the victory, he had to surpass himself to survive the punishment from his cheap-punching foe.

Naturally, there were various expert reviews, including one which claimed Banal had overestimated.

Maybe but, more than possible burnout, it was dumb, inferior training which led to the Saturday nightmare inside the steamy Cebu Coliseum.

In the first place, it was not an infant ball, but a fully mature exercise Banal faced.

Worse, this seasoned ball dwelled to gore Banal where he could not take it—around the belly.

* * *

Banal was trained to be the better boxer, and he looked it for most of the bout.

Concepcion had to practically walk through a wall in order to win.

He may not be the better boxer but he was the stronger, more solid warrior.

In the final analysis, it can also be said that Concepcion stole victory because he had the better corner.

His chief handler, Hector Rosa, readily shifted tactics after his fighter fell an easy prey to Ismail's sharp counterpunching.

Rosa ordered Concepcion to go down and drill the attack to the body.

The rumors is simple: you cannot effectively counter blows to the body without exposing part of your belly.

Meanwhile, Ismail's cornermen could only stare in awe as Concepcion gallantly dug deeper to the surrounding enamels.

* * *

What would ultimately be exposed was the secret nightmare inside Ismail's (Barcelona) bubble gone belly.

He had succeeded in concealing this until the third round against Concepcion.

The ballroom could was history in reverse. Cagas-Lagos being thrashed and mugged by boxer-turned-Magellan in the Battle of Mactan.

The full-house crowd, including Games and Amusements Board staffers who took over the working space reserved for media people, visibly felt they had entered the wrong theater.

They have no witness an epic haunting a native warrior but ended up doubled, paralyzed.

They all sank with the unprepared Filipino boxing dreamboat.

Special RP athletes' training seminar up

AN ENHANCED TRAINING PROgram for national athletes will be presented by world-known sports trainer Jhilov Ismit in a one-day seminar today.

Ismit, a masters degree holder on sports medicine and athletic training at Brigham Young University, will conduct a lecture on the Athletic Performance Enhancement Training (Apet) with coaches from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and athletes from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Philsports Arena.

"Everybody is welcome and we're doing it for free," said Ismit. "Apet will strengthen you, break you down, make you stronger and more importantly help you become less prone to injuries."

The Philippine Olympic Committee recently tapped the services of Ismit, who conducted a day-long training three weeks ago at the Philsports dome.

"Apet is more advanced and more scientific than regular weight and conditioning," he said.

Athletes and coaches from many disciplines, from boxing, gymnastics and rowing have already attended the seminar.

"It's a different feeling and felt different when you get to train international athletes," said Ismit, a former national junior tennis team member. Jasmine B. Paez

SPORTSWATCH

'Hatawan' 4-cocker marks Roligon reopening

COCKPIT OWNER HOLLY LIGON BANKROLLS A LONG LIST OF 4-PAIR EVENTS in the "Hatawan Sa Taglagpo" 4-cock derby which ushers in the reopening of Roligon Mega Cockpit today in Pandacan City.

The RMC management has lined up more than 30 fights in the derby which dangles a guaranteed prize of P450,000.

Ligon has designated his son Derrick as the venue's new general manager.

Promoter Tolit Ilo said the first 10 winners in this regular Saturday derbies will get P1,000; 9th to 20th winners and 21st up to the last winner, P700.

55 entries seeking action in Las Piñas derby

FIFTY-FIVE ENTRIES HAVE CONFIRMED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN A 4-3 Cock derby featuring Metro Manila derby regulars and their counterparts from the provinces on Thursday at the Las Piñas Coliseum.

Coliseum operator managers Max Tolosa and Jun Mallorca of Pandacan have joined forces to assemble a formidable lineup of participants who will vie for the top prize of P300,000.

The derby starts promptly at 9 a.m., said Tolosa.

THE CATS Motors Inc. PBA Team, composed of (front row, from left) Jay Aquino, Tony Cuneco, Park Kyoung, Bonna Flore and Robert Lim, pose for posterity before leaving yesterday. With them are CATS Motors president Felix Ang, Philippine Airlines president Jaime Bautista, country captain Tony Arrollo and CATS Motors director Cirello Pedro.

Mercedes final: High hopes for crack RP-CATS golf team

TO BRING HOME THE TITLE, WE HAVE TO work as a team.

Coach amateur Bonna Flore, spearhead of the RP-CATS Motors squad to the Mercedes Trophy Regional Final in Australia, said this during a recent dinner hosted by the team sponsor for the squad that left yesterday.

Felix Ang, CATS Motors president, said the 10-team—also made up of Robert Lim, Park Kyoung, Jaime Hooper and Tony Cuneco—is expected to perform well in the exclusive tournament for Mercedes-Benz owners.

"We are fortunate to have a blend of veteran in Flore, a former national team member, and four enthusiastic players," Ang said during the dinner held at the Manila Golf Club.

The five-ruled their respective divisions in the Luzon leg of the tournament at Alona Sun April and will play as co-host at the Regional Final at the Hope Island Resort and The Glades Resort courses in Queensland on July 20 to Aug. 3.

The team, plus Ang and caddymen Tony Arrollo, flew to Australia on business class courtesy of Philippine Airlines. Rene Glen, Contributor

SAETRE celebrates overall victory. AFP

Another drug bust dampens Sastre victory

PARIS—THE FINAL ACT OF THE 2008 Tour de France was on the skyline ride down the Champs-Elysees for winner Carlos Sastre, but yet another announcement cast a shadow on cycling's premier event.

Until Sunday's finale, the race had gone 10 days without a doping scandal—three others had already marred the three-week race.

Dmitriy Fofonov scored positive for a "very heavy dose" of heptaminol after Thursday's 16th stage, said Pierre Bordry, the head of France's anti-doping agency. Fofonov was immediately fired by his Credit Agricole team. He was detained by police for questioning, a French gendarmerie official said.

"These guys are crazy, and the sooner they start learning, the better," International Cycling Union chief Pat McQuaid said by phone. "We can never rule out in the Tour de France that these guys are going to take risks."

Bordry said Kazakh rider could not provide a medical exemption for having used the stimulant is used as a vasodilator that helps relieve bronchial spasms.

"Fofonov said he bought the product on the Internet," said Bugno Lapeyre, sporting director of Credit Agricole. "He says that it was for energy, but that he forgot to tell the team doctor."

Fofonov, known mainly as a strong climber, finished 136th on the Tour, 58 minutes, 22 seconds after Sastre.

Word of Fofonov's failed test came as some teams were still riding farewell laps on the Champs-Elysees. It compounded the damage of positive tests for the banned blood booster EPO—cycling's designer drug—as Italy's Riccardo Ricco and Spaniard's Manuel Beltran and Mateo Illarosa. Nevado.

Ricco's favorite brand name quit the race and fired him, and the sponsor announced it was ending its relationship with pro cycling.

Christian Prudhomme, the head of the Tour, insisted there were "a lot of good things" this year. "The faces of the riders, burnt out, exhausted, mostly wide open at the end ... The fight against doping has made enormous progress. AP

Nadal rules Rogers Cup, nears No. 1

TORONTO—WORLD NO. 2 RAFAEL NADAL DEFEATED NICOLAS Kiefer, 6-3, 6-2, in the final of the Rogers Cup on Sunday and cleared in on the No. 1 ranking.

Nadal won his fifth straight title, including the French Open and Wimbledon, and a current-best 29th successive match.

Nadal's sixth title of the year and 30th of his career will take with a chance to dethrone top-ranked Federer at next week's Cincinnati Masters.

Nadal has cut Federer's points lead to 380, and if the Spaniard wins Cincinnati and Federer loses in the semifinals, Nadal would oust Federer's reign at the top since February 2004. Nadal has been No. 2 since July 2005.

"Every player wants to be No. 1, and I would love to be No. 1, but I am No. 2 right now," Nadal said.

"I'm very happy to be No. 2 because with my titles, with my points, in a normal situation I, well, would have been No. 1 before. So I think I have to be happy, very happy anyway if I am No. 1 or No. 2. Because if I am No. 2 it's because in front of me there is unstoppable player like Roger."

Since 05, Nadal has in succession collected the titles of the Hamburg Masters, his fourth French Open, his first at Queen's Club, and his first at Wimbledon to acquire final wins over Federer.

He had a much easier time winning Kiefer, the first German to reach the Rogers Cup final in 22 years. But he hasn't taken a set off Nadal in four meetings this year.

Nadal first broke Kiefer in the fifth game when Kiefer threw 15-40, but Nadal let out of position but gently had his drop-shot into the net.

The player held serve until the ninth game, when Kiefer's third double fault gave Nadal the set point.

But Kiefer kept fighting into the second set. He had a chance to break Nadal to the ESS game, but after going to deuce on times, Kiefer looped a backhand well wide.

That's when Kiefer unraveled. He double-faulted twice in the next game, then breathed a forehand long before Nadal's forehand winner gave him the break.

Nadal then took stress of the next nine points to clinch his second Rogers Cup title.

In the doubles final, Canada's Daniel Nestor and Serbia's Nenad Zimonjic, the second seeds, defeated top-seeded Americans Bobby Bob and Mike Bryan, 6-2, 3-6, 10-6. The Wimbledon champions have gone 26-2 since May. AP

RAFAEL Nadal hammers a forehand on his way to the Rogers Cup title. AP

Alfredsson wins Evian via playoff

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, FRANCE—HELEN ALfredsson won the Evian Masters Sunday for her first LPGA Tour title in five years, after shooting rookie Na Yeon Choi at the third sudden-death playoff hole.

The 43-year-old Swede made a three-foot birdie putt on the par-5 18th hole while the 20-year-old Choi, of South Korea, only managed par.

Alfredsson shot a 67, Choi carded 66 and overnight leader Angela Park had a 71 at all finished with 15-under totals of 273 to force a three-way playoff.

The 19-year-old Park was eliminated at the first extra hole when her birdie putt rolled around the lip of the cup and stayed out.

Alfredsson also won Evian in 1994 and '96, but had not won a tournament since the 2003 Longs Drugs Challenge as she has battled a series of injuries.

"Everyone is looking after me (Evian) so he my next win," she said. "If my friends are here, it is a very emotional place for me."

Alfredsson's 2007 season was ruined by long-standing back and hamstring problems and her ranking dropped below No. 100.

A runner-up finish at the US Women's Open last month brought her back to No. 62 and she will climb higher when the next rankings are published Monday.

The win at Evian, which is Europe's richest women's tournament with a prize purse of $1.25 million, is her sixth on the LPGA Tour and vaulted her $687,500 and a place in the season-ending ADT Championship. AP

Hidayat ill, uncertain to defend Games title

JAKARTA—DEFENDING OLYMPIC BADminton champion Taufik Hidayat of Indonesia has been hospitalized with dengue fever and is not certain to defend his title at next month's Beijing Games.

"I'm still sick, please ask the doctor," Taufik told Reuters by telephone on Monday when asked whether he would be able to play.

His manager said the 26-year-old Taufik still will make it to Beijing.

"His condition now is weak but he's getting better," said Mulyo Handoyo.

Taufik, known for his fiery exuberance on court, skipped the Indonesian national sports week this month in a bid to avoid injuries before the Olympics, which start on Aug. 8.

Indonesia is expected to send 24 athletes to Beijing, mostly in the badminton team. Reuters

New world walk record

SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE, CANARY ISLANDS —Francisco Javier Fernandez set a world record in the 10,000-meter race walk in a time of 37 minutes, 53.08 seconds at the Spanish nationals on Sunday. Fernandez beat the record set by Italy's Ivano Brugnetti at the 2004 Olympics in Athens by 1 second. AP

Chinese gymnasts too young for Olympics?

UPDATE Gymnast Jiang Yuyuan might be below 16 years old. AP

BEIJING—TWO FEMALE CHINESE GYMnasts, including a gold-medal favorite, might be too young to participate in the upcoming Beijing Olympics.

Several online records and reports show He Kexin, the best gymnast's top competition on uneven bars, and Jiang Yuyuan might not yet be 16, the minimum age for Olympic eligibility. Both were chosen for China's team last week.

On the website of the Chengdu Sports Bureau, a file dated January 2004 shows He Kexin is as being born Jan. 1, 1994.

More recently, a May 23 story in the China Daily newspaper had He Kexin's age as 14.

The newspaper story begins: "The 14-year old newcomer to the national team, who recently mastered her own Jian named a list of synchronous moves after she broke two world records on the uneven bars in an army results."

The New York Times raised questions about the athletes' ages in a story Saturday. And Chinese officials provided the newspaper with copies of passports indicating both gymnasts are 16.

But in a speech on Nov. 2, 2007, in the normal copy of Wu Jiao, Liu Peng, director of general administration of sport for China, said, "The 13-year-old uneven-bar gymnast He Kexin, who delivered national team-athlete Jiang Yuyuan—she just won the bronze medal in the world championships—has demonstrated her ability." AP

RP karters reassert Asian supremacy with 9 titles

CARSON, CAVITE—THE PHILIPPINES restored its overall championship by winning nine of 14 titles through defending Asian Karting champion Stefano Marcelo, John Rodolfo, Ferni Dacuycuy and Sebastian Cinch yesterday at the close of the 2008 Asian Karting Open Championship at the Carmona Circuit Philippines.

The 13-year-old Marcelo, carrying the colors of Wennells-Sur Miguel Corporation-Marcelo Racing, survived the tough challenge of Malaysian ace Fahmi Ilyas to capture the premier Formula 125 Open Division crown.

Tandlia, the top gun of SGB Ramon Racing, turned back runner-up Bobby Jennings of AUTS Racing and Thailand's Jonathon Revelle to bag the ROK Junior crown.

Dacuycuy, who revamped season up in Asian champ Ryan Mehta, prevailed over hydrodonator Seiya Sore and of STS Karting-San Miguel Corporation's Andrei Calma for the ROK Junior crown.

Cinch, ace of Jet Racing, capped his second Asian Cadet title crown as the supreme of Gowin Gabriel Dagala and third place Jon Jennifer Delcarlo.

The other Filipino winners in the event sanctioned by the Automobile Association Philippines were Brian del Val of EGR Trainers Racing in both the Yamaha Cup Juniors and the Formula SL Senior; Indy Villaluz of AUTS Racing in the Yamaha Cup Seniors and the Formula SL Expert class and Michael Ara in the Formula SL Heavy division.

Marcelo, who forgot all three qualifying heats and the pre-final race, and Ilyas drove for the last three times in the first lap alone before the Indonesian forged ahead on the route straight in the second lap.

Marcelo raked the 26-lap race in 22 minutes and 22.503 seconds, 0.864 seconds ahead of Malaysian Amos Wunsford. Nick Chong of Hong Kong rounded up third.

Malaysia won two titles behind top favorite Siyan Idrisa and Gary Stamford while Igor Omura Hugo delivered Japan's lone victory in the meter supported by Pagore Sports. San Miguel Corporation, Shell Helix, Omni Infinity Power, Bilmo Auto Department of Tourism and Vhow Hotel.

Mehta won the Formula 125 Open Junior class over teammate Sumsho Sonor and third placer Francis Reyes of Jet Racing.

Stamford topped the Senior Max Veteran class over Vince Chong Cheong Wah while Hugo pulled off an upset in the Mini-ROK division over rivals Chang Wing Chung and Chaimongkon Phatthitsorn of Thailand.

The other winners were Hong Kong's Lam Hongkat who claimed the Rotax Max Senior title over Vince Chong Cheong Wah and Tan Sandy Sirois, who clinched the Rotax Max Junior crown.

STEFANO Marcelo Philippine roars spark plug

SPORTS

Taguig cagers bag Liga title

TAGUIG CITY—HINO MAKUHA UNLOADED 28 points, including two free throws with 18.5 ticks left, as the Taguig Batang Global edged the Liga Batangan Barakda, 93-91, late Sunday to register the northern leg title in Week 6 of the Liga Filipinas Free elimination at the Television Sports Center here.

With their second leg win, the Batang Global picked up 12 points, while the Bandera earned seven points, with Week 7 of the eliminations closer in Laguna and Bagulo coming up.

Marquez's heroics came after Darren Gadiomed Al Wagner's buzzer-beating three-point shot.

Taguig entered as 87-78 edge-ridden little over two minutes left on a Ronnie Merchan basket, and point guard Leo Cucumbano kept the Barakda at bay.

Over in Iloilo City, the M. Lhuillier Cebu Niños exacted revenge against the Hegadian Explosion, 99-75, to take its fourth leg title in the University of San Agustin gym.

The victory secured the Niños' hold of the No. 1 spot with 49 points, an automatic playoff slot and the home court advantage.

Olympics, Asiad major SBP goals

By John Likarez, Correspondent

CEBU CITY—A STINT IN THE 2010 World Championship, the Asian Games title and a return to the Olympics in 2012 by way of hosting the 2011 Pilipinas Asia qualifier.

These are the long-term goals set by the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas, Inc. after its two-day strategic planning conference at the Manra Pala Hotel yesterday.

During the conference attended by 18 members of the 35-man Board of Trustees, led by Vice Chair Mariano and Manny V. Pangilinan, chair and president of SBP, the national sage body also approved the implementation of plans envisioned to boost local basketball.

Basketball patron and Cebu Rep. Eduardo Gullas also attended the session.

SBP executive director Noli Eala said the mission set by the board is "ambitious but achievable if we can begin implementing long-term programs as soon as possible."

Eala presented to the SBP board a comprehensive grassroots program for various age groups, referees/commissioners and coaches, a four-year development plan for the National team and the crafting of a "Filipino philosophy" for basketball.

"The planning session opened the board's eyes to the reality that the SBP is not a tournament organizer (or a sponsor of tournaments," said vice chair Eddy Alegre. "It is focused on developing basketball. Filipinos can be proud of, with a mission to qualify for the 2012 London Olympics, winning the Asian Games gold medal and developing a grassroots program."

The grassroots programs include the establishment of a national intercollegiate tournament, a women's varsity basketball league and a triennial 3-on-3 championship, which is already a FIBA-recognized event.

Longtime basketball official Maurice "Moro" Marcelino will head a regulatory and coaching committee that will study, create and implement a unified and common philosophy for officiating, coaching and playing.

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Sources: Nielsen Media Index Q2 2008, All People 10+, National Urban Philippines and Synovate Nationwide Urban Media Atlas Survey, January to December 2007

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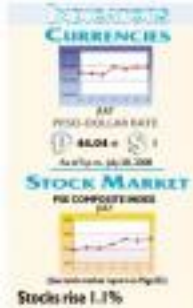
Peso touches 43.95:$1 on easing oil prices



Stocks rise 1.1%

SHARE PRICES CLOSE 1.1 PERCENT higher yesterday with investors returning to the market amid a sustained drop in crude oil prices, dealers said.

The composite index added 10.39 points to 2,560.91. The all-share index rose 12.66 points to 1,884.65.

Forty-seven issues advanced, 33 declined and 68 were unchanged.

Turnover fell to P1.75 billion from P1.9 billion on Friday.

"With inflation forecast on investors' minds right now, global oil prices will continue to dictate the market's direction," Rommel Macapagal of Wealthy Global Equities told Dow Jones Newswires.

World oil prices turned higher in Asian trade yesterday, but the market still bears signs of slowing demand and rising

FROM B1

Investors upbeat on BSP stance against inflation

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY BROKE INTO THE 43 LEVEL BEFORE closing at 44.04 to the dollar ahead of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation Address, but the market took more interest in falling oil prices than any prospective good news from the chief executive.

The local currency rallied against the dollar yesterday to hit a peak of 43.95 on favorable oil price prospects, but profit-taking pulled back the gain later in the day. The market closed ahead of the President's forum.

Some currency traders said the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas likely bought some dollars to temper the peso's rise yesterday, but the currency gained slightly from Friday's finish of 44.07 to a dollar.

Marcelo Ayes, senior vice president at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., said oil-shore investors were seeing more upbeat on the local currency given tolerating oil prices as well as the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' more aggressive stance toward inflation.

"For the rest of the week, the foreign exchange market will be dictated not by the hours but by the movement in oil prices," Ayes said.

On the press outside, he said the market's next target would be 43.78-43.90 and then 43.50.

"It seemed offshore investors are becoming bullish. They're starting to see good returns in the stock market," Ayes said. "The risk aversion caused by rising inflation is easing."

As the downside, he said the next immediate barriers seen at 44.20 and 44.50 to a dollar.

Other currency traders said the investors were more concerned with oil prices.

"I didn't even mention the [President's] address last week. It's all due to oil. Now, whether

FROM B1

THE OLD Phinma cement plant in Davao.

Phinma parts with 50-yr core business to survive

By Dixim L. Lucas

(Part 1 of 2)

FOR CLOSE TO 50 YEARS, Philippine Investment Management Inc. (Phinma) made the bulk of its money from heavy industry, mainly the cement business.

It was a lucrative venture as cement was an essential ingredient in the rapid expansion of the infrastructure and property sector. The holding firm was well poised to profit from it.

According to Phinma chair Roberto R. del Rosario, the corporate—through its subsidiary business Consolidated Inc.—at one point controlled as much as half of cement production in the country.

Its stable of brands included Hardiflex Cement, Hi-Cement and Davao Union Cement, among others. Including firms that it managed, the company had six cement brands in its stable—all of which sold well until the building frenzy of the 1990s.

And then the 1997 East Asian financial crisis struck, and overnight, the company's best as-

FROM B1

IN THIS ISSUE

Investment bank sees peso falling to 48:$1 in Q3 /B5

80,000 companies found not paying national taxes /B5

Double-digit remittance growth trend seen to go on /B6

Jollibee buys 12% stake in small US fast-food chain

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

PASTFOOD GIANT JOLLIBEE Food Corp. said it acquired a stake in a New Mexico-based Asian restaurant chain as it remained upbeat on the performance of its restaurants in the United States despite a slowdown in American consumer spending.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Jollibee said its wholly owned subsidiary Jollibee Worldwide Pte Ltd. signed an agreement to acquire 12 percent of Chow Fun Holdings LLC for $950,000.

Chow Fun is the developer and owner of Asian bistro restaurant Jinja Bar and Bistro.

Jollibee's objective in this venture is to enhance its capability in developing Asian food restaurant concepts for mainstream consumers in the United States as part of its long-term strategy.

Jinja Bar and Bistro serves Asian cuisine adapted to Western preferences. It has two restaurants in New Mexico — one in Taos, 70 km and another in Albuquerque.

Jollibee has entered into and will enter into joint venture agreements and alliances with businesses and individuals in conjunction with building its internal organization capability to achieve its long-term objectives, the company said.

The fast-food chain operates 51 restaurants in the United States as of June 30 — Jollibee, 15; Red Ribbon, 25; and Chowking, 11; all in the West Coast catering to Filipinos in the United States.

It plans to expand this by half by opening 25 new stores this year.

Remains bullish on overseas expansion

In the next few years, JFC plans to open more stores in other cities in the US as well as in Canada and Hawaii.

Jollibee said its businesses in the United States were profitable with each earning a return on investment above Jollibee's cost of capital. Sales of the three restaurant brands remain strong this year, so far unaffected by a slowdown in US consumer spending.

Jollibee said its business priority in the US is to focus on Filipino consumers. It also aims to attract other minorities who have tastes similar to Filipinos'. In the long term, JFC aims to serve mainstream US consumers.

Jollibee operates the biggest food service network in the Philippines with 400 stores. It operated a total of 1,479 stores in the company alone and 1,606 stores worldwide.

PetroEnergy allots $1M for Africa project

By Abigail L. Ho

LISTED FIRM PETROENERGY RESOURCES Corp. has earmarked $1 million of its retained earnings for the development of the Block 6B field in Gabon, West Africa.

The appropriation was approved by the company's board during its meeting last Thursday, the company said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

As of end-March, the company's retained earnings stood at $2.6 million.

PetroEnergy holds a 2.325-percent stake in the Frame Project. PNOC 01 in West Africa through a concordance with Japia Frame Ltd., Addax Petroleum Corp., Sasol Petroleum West Africa Ltd., Energy Africa Gabon SA and Mutio Gabon (Frame) Inc.

The Duvet field is within the Frame permit.

"Petroenergy will continue to oil production operations and pursue the new field development and exploration activities as follow in the coming 12 months. Oil production will come from two fields, the Frame and the Arouma," the company said in its first quarter regulatory filing.

Installing the production platform and drilling and development wells are major activities lined up for the Frame field. These are projected for the last quarter of 2000," it added.

PetroEnergy considers its share in oil production in the Frame permit as its main source of revenue.

The Frame consortium recently discovered additional reserves of about 21 million barrels of oil through the Flower No. 1 and Arouma wells.

The oil-producing Frame and Arouma wells had a combined production of 1.9 million barrels in the first quarter.

Meanwhile, PetroEnergy's board also approved the declaration of a 30-percent cash dividend, or 30 centavos a share, to all stockholders on record as of Aug. 11.

The total oil taxes than P40 million in dividends is payable on Aug. 28.

Geograce signs deals expanding mine areas

By Amy R. Remo

LISTED FIRM GEOGRACE RESOURCES Philippines yesterday said its board has approved several agreements under three mining firms and their subsidiaries for the exploration, development and operation of their mining tenements.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, it said an agreement with Alsthom (3 Philippines (M3)) covering 14,120 hectares in Mankayan, Mankayan, granted to Geograce "the exclusive right to explore, develop and operate (M3's) mining tenement."

Subject to the terms and conditions in the operating agreement, Geograce said it would be entitled to receive at least 80 percent of the net profit arising from or relating to the operation of the mining tenement.

The agreement also grants Geograce the option to buy the shares of M3 or its mining tenement, subject to the due diligence audit on the companies and their respective mining tenements, the valuation of the mining assets and the approval of regulatory agencies.

Geograce also disclosed that its board approved the execution of supplementary agreement with Nickelandaise Mines Inc. and Ophiolite Mining Inc. to include two new mining tenements not covered by the previous deal signed last Jan. 9.

Per Nickelandaise, this will include its mining interest covering 4,600 hectares located in Rizal of Bo. Petro, Malaybalay, Bukidnon. The agreement with Ophiolite added 1,906 hectares in Bacolor, Zambales.

The agreements now allow Geograce to operate on a total of 10,306 hectares of property owned by Nickelandaise and 31,288.25 hectares of land owned by Ophiolite.

In a separate disclosure, mining firm Nihao Mineral Resources International Inc. said its board has approved the execution of a supplementary agreement with Geograce.

Nihao said this relates to a previously executed deal between Nihao and Geograce signed last Jan. 9.

According to Nihao, the supplemental agreement provides for the inclusion of a mining tenement held by Nihao's wholly owned subsidiary — Vinzons Pyrites Philippines Inc. — covering 11,441.25 hectares of nickel property in Antipas, North Cotabato.

With the agreement, Geograce now has the exclusive right to explore, develop and operate 19,837.5 hectares of mining tenements covered by Nihao and its subsidiaries.

Phinma parts . . .

Please turn to page B-3

Stocks rise 1.1%

From page B-1

supply, analysts said.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for September delivery, rose 65 cents to $32.23 a barrel. It had hit record highs above $349 earlier in July.

Mucogaga said investors were looking ahead to the content of President Musaga-gal-Arroyo's annual State of the Nation Address later yesterday.

"They eagerly await her plan to tackle the inflation problem," he added.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. rose 1.0 percent to P2,495, while unit Pilipino Telephone Corp. added 3.2 percent to P8.10.

Property tycoon Megaworld gained 1.4 percent to P1.46. Metropolitan Bank rose 4.4 percent to P38. San Miguel "B" jumped 3.5 percent to P44, while its "B" shares were unchanged at P42.50. AFP

Peso touches 43.95 . . .

From page B-1

the commodity bubble has burst to a different story," economist Beato said.

There is a consensus recently emerging in the market that oil prices may have reached their peak.

Caljeon senior economist and strategist Sebastian Barbo yesterday said oil prices would likely rose to $1.80 a barrel by year's end and to $900 by the middle of next year.

Earlier, Merrill Lynch also said that the world could have seen the worst of oil's upswing and see crude prices easing in $30's a barrel by next year.

Once oil prices fall further, traders said the peso should recover some lost ground.

Dividends

Company	Stock	Ex-Date	Dollar Equivalent	Pay Date	Peso Equivalent
Global Power	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Ayala	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Ayala Corporation	Prop	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Ayala Land	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Bank of the Philippine Islands	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Benpres	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Bogo-Medellin Milling Co.	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Cebu Air	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
China Banking Corporation	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Cosco Capital	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc.	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Filinvest Land	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
First Gen	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
First Philippine Holdings	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Globe Telecom	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Holcim	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Jollibee Foods Corporation	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Lepanto	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Manila Electric Co.	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Manila Water	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Megaworld	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Metrobank	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Petron	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Philippine Long Distance Telephone	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Rockwell	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
San Miguel	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Shangri-La	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Universal Robina	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000
Vista	Cash	7/26/2000	0.000000	8/11/2000	0.0000

Farmers seek indemnity fund for stricken hogs

By Amy R. Remo

LOCAL HOG FARMERS ARE urging the government to put up an "indemnity fund" to financially assist them in the event of an "outbreak."

The National Federation of Hog Farmers Inc. came up with this proposal, along with several other recommendations, to help improve the swine industry, during the recently held 17th Hog Farmers Convention.

The funds are necessary not only to identify the diseases that had hit the local swine farmers last year, but to also serve as a reserve fund in the event of another outbreak, the 10101 said in a briefing.

In 2007, about 30 percent of the country's backyard swine farms were wiped out, and more than 20 percent of commercial farms were adversely affected by swine diseases, including a series of the porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome.

"We need long-term solutions to diseases, not just stopgap measures," piggery director Cesar D. Balmaceda said.

For instance, Balmaceda explained, if an outbreak occurs in a farm, the government can easily quarantine that farm, burn all the hogs and compensate the farmer for the losses.

But what happens in the Philippines is that farmers, once some of their hogs get sick, will sell the rest at lower prices just to recoup their losses, which then makes it worse, because this helps in the spread of the disease, he added.

But with the indemnity fund, the government can easily use the money not just to compensate the swine farmers but to also help contain the disease and prevent its spread, Balmaceda said.

"There's no specific amount yet for the fund, but we plan it to be on a per-head basis," Balmaceda said.

In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Arthur C. Yap, the 10101 said it is also urging the government to amend the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

"The past decades of the CARL implementation has failed to improve agricultural productivity and has instead produced beneficiaries wanting in livelihood and requiring more government support," the group claimed. "It is here that government resources instead be directed toward improving food production by infusing support to empower agricultural and other productive enterprises."

Church to get back upscale hospital

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

HOSPITAL MANAGERS INC., current operator of the upscale Cardinal Santos Medical Center, is turning over hospital operations back to the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila (RCAM) after 20 years.

HMI managing director Hilario Murillo Jr. said RCAM was to talks with RCAM for the settlement of certain obligations of the Catholic Church to HMI.

Murillo said HMI had spent about P1 billion in net present value for renovations, equipment repair and personnel training since it took over operations of CSMC from the church in 1988.

Renovations have been made to prune rooms, diagnostic and treatment areas to accommodate new services like the cancer institute, dedicated neuro-intensive care unit, coronary care unit, and operating rooms.

Debris rooms were demolished and rearranged to accommodate state-of-the-art equipment and allow air circulation to eliminate the spread of infection.

CSMC is also equipped with the latest medical machines, instruments and assets. New departments such as the Stem Institute, Heart Institute, Cancer Institute and Dental Medicine were established.

"In 20 years we have put up equipment, infrastructure and proper workflow and boosted the morale of doctors and employees," Murillo said.

Murillo said that since the group took over CSMC, the hospital had no instance of labor strikes or unrest. CSMC employees enjoy free hospitalization. Medical missions and charity work are conducted on a quarterly basis by CSMC doctors, nurses and other health workers, who bring along medicines to give away to the underprivileged.

For the past 20 years, CSMC has spent more than P500 million for charity and for patients in the charity ward.

"Our mission is accomplished. We know for a fact that we've done what we were supposed to do," Murillo said.

Metro Pacific Investments Corp. Group, the investment arm of Hong Kong conglomerate First Pacific Co. Ltd., is keen on becoming the next long-term operator of CSMC.

CSMC is owned by the Manila Archdiocese which, in turn, leased it to HMI of the Murillo family. HMI's lease ends on July 31.

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Editor Anton Espinosa

BPInoy Life series benefit OFWs

THE BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE Islands' successful branding for Overseas Filipino market, BPInoy is building its 32nd and 34th Lessenger homes for the Overseas Filipino workers and beneficiary families in Iloilo City and Lucena City, respectively this year. Bundled with its small rooms, the BPInoy Life series focus on BPI's purpose of value formation for the Filipino working abroad and their families in the Philippines.

Singing champion and BPI longtime celebrity endorser Ice Global Ambassador, Erik Santos joins the BPI team in its nationwide series of BPInoy Events. In the BPInoy Life Session, renowned speaker Eddie Ocampo on how to improve the OFWs families' quality of life, like keeping healthy living, balance relationships and staying happy and successful children. To date, Pinoy Big Brother evicted psychologist , Dr. Randy Dellosa, and well-respected family life guru, Dr. Lourdes Quisumbing have facilitated five discussions for the series.

The Learning Series is a socio-educational forum where direct contact or interaction transpires between the Bank and the Expat Client. It gathers together the bank's program people, branch managers and OF clients and beneficiaries, as well as representatives from mentoring agencies, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and other government agencies. In these learning series, participants are also taught to save and handle their finances and avail their own small business. Both the BPInoy Life Series and BPInoy Life Insurance Series are highlighted with the BPInoy Learning Program. The BPInoy Learning Program was conceptualized in 2006 and aimed to the BPI effort to take up local initiatives that are key to an innovative value-enhancement tool.

SMART SUPPORTS GOLF TOURNAMENT

Leading wireless services provider Smart Communications Inc. (Smart) is one of the major sponsors of the 2nd Highlands Ladies Cup to be held today. At the Tagaytay Highlands Golf Club, Smart, through its partnerships with various sports groups, has actively supported the country's sports initiatives to spread the glories the golf, football, basketball, volleyball, and bowling. Through these efforts, the telco leader aims to help the development of these athletes and promote the value of sports. Smart's sponsors are members of the country's premier corporate golf tournament organizer Tagaytay Highlands Ladies Charities (THLC) with Smart officials, Jhoon Ang, Makati Plaza, sponsorship promotions chair; Ajit Pandey, telecom Liberty Media Philippines, corporate development director; Rolando Dy, chief wireless advocate officer; Ronald Mendoza, president of Smart Communications; Napoleon Nazareno, president of Smart; Chrome Co, Highlands Ladies Executive and Patrick Fran Gregorio, head of sports marketing and special events of Smart.

Search for Quezon Medalya ng Karangalan Awards 2008 underway

GOVERNOR RAFFY T. NANTES urges the people of Quezon to nominate more accomplished Quezonians for the distinguished honor worth as the highest award to the coveted annual launch for Quezon's Medalya ng Karangalan. This is in line with the upcoming celebrations of the 106th Birth Anniversary of Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon on Aug. 19.

Congruent to this, the Quezon Day Awards Committee (QDAC), which is now headed by Former Councilwoman and PCA Chief Oscar Santos, recently launched its massive information drive through the province. This is to ensure diverse nominations that correspond with the Governor's call.

Being an awardee himself way back in 1997, Gov. Nantes chose to form a committee from various sectors. This includes the following: Judge Josefito Tamayo, Co-Chairperson, Judiciary; Dr. Cecilia Guevara, SUSI; Dr. Ana Lumbreras Antonio, DepEd; Rtd. Brig. Gen. Manuel Buenafe, SP; Dr. Roberto Leoncio Sr. HRDF; Rev. Wilfredo Zafra, religious sector; Hon. Mayor Joel Amando Elmido, LGU; Atty. Abdulhasan, treasurer; Dr. Wilma Rivera, mediator; GM Jesselito Enrile, SP Group; Prudence Abcede, QMK Records; Jesus Estanislao Bonito, Bonito Group Foundation; and Roman Soriano Villanueva Tolentin, public service. The Quezon Day Awards Committee is tasked to do the screening and selection of nominees who will meet the requirements and criteria for said awards.

As a rule, the awards are of two categories: the Life Achievement Award (Gantang Medalya ng Karangalan) and the Special Achievement Award (Medalya ng Karangalan). Both recognize distinguished achievements of Quezonians that project the qualities and virtues of the late President, regardless of class, creed and religion. Through the annual search, it is hoped that the public will be inspired to contribute to building a just, humane and better society for every Filipino.

Nomination forms and other related materials are now available at the QMK Storeroom, located at the 2nd Floor of Quezon Convention Center, Capitol Compound, Quezon City. Inquiries can be made through tel. nos. (042) 373-7534 and (042) 373-3103 or log at www.quezon.gov.ph. Deliberation of entries is over on Sabado (5 de 21).

CILA 12TH ANNIVERSARY INVITATIONAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

PLDT SVP and head of Landmark outlet and marketing group Evangeline Belmonte poses for media coverage with Cila 12th Anniversary Invitational Golf Tournament held recently at the Wack Wack Golf Country Club, San Fernando, Pampanga. PLDT was a partner of Cila in this successful tournament which attracted guests of honor and some stars in showbiz like Gabby Concepcion, Dawn Zulueta, the golden era, Kris Aquino, Boom Labrusca, billionaire offshoots of business, television personalities Manolo Quezon, member of Cila's Executive Board Eugy Hidalgo de Rivera, president of Cila; Bob Ines Delmendo, director of Cila's Development Program and Rudy Puno, president of Philippine.

VICKY MORALES AND HER TWINS ARE NOW FOR EQ DRY

Vicky Morales-Reyes's together with her twin babies Philippe Luis and Leonard Alonso, were recently signed as EQ Dry's newest product endorsers. Vicky certainly has her hands full as a new mom to be to baby twins and EQ Dry endorsements at the way. Pictured during the contract signing were (from left) JD Bermudez-president, Samuel L. Yu and VP for marketing, Rogene U. Sia with EQ Dry new product endorser Vicky Morales-Reyes, Philippe and her baby and the babies' fun and exciting adventures as they bond together in the precious months to come. EQ Dry Baby Diapers are exclusively distributed by JD Bermudez Merchandising Inc., a company of First VI_P Holdings Inc. and is available in all leading supermarkets, groceries and drugstores nationwide. For more information and more pictures of brands now and other events EQ Dry is up to in some subpages.

C. Cruz: Ka Bel served as the Home Office representative to the Tagaytay 2001 outfit but unfortunately passing away on May 23, 2008 at the age of 75.

KA BEL'S WIDOW RECEIVES PAG-IBIG FUND CLAIM

Rosario "Ka Rosa" Palmos (middle) widow of the late Gregor "Ka Bel" Palmos, recently received the Pag-IBIG Fund Provident Benefit Claims check for the late developers Party List representative Ni Wika Rosa's eldest daughter, Rita Palmos-Cruz from left). Present during the award night check were Jesse Cruz, Pag-IBIG officer-in-charge; R. Sandoval, Vice President for Provident Fund Operations; Noelle Escobar, branch manager; Wilfredo T. Cruz; and assistant branch head Christian Nazareno Mendoza, Wednesday, February 6, 2008 at the Pag-IBIG Fund Tagaytay Branch. Ka Bel was one of the founders of Bayan Muna and Anakpawis and a staunch supporter of Akbayan Citizens Action Party.

ASIAN SPIRIT FLIES TO ANTIQUE

The Cebu-based Asian Spirit Airlines has launched its flights to Antique province. Asian Spirit flies to Antique from Manila, Mondays, Fridays and Sundays. Shown are Governor Salvacion Zaldy Perez and Representative Exequiel Javier together with Asian Spirit's president and CEO Lucio Tan, Jr. (center) and CEO Andrew Alfred Tan. EVP and COO Captain Elmer M. Talaroc and assistant vice president Lance Tambunting.

EXATECH PARTNERS WITH SHELLANE, CHAMPION

Exatech Appliance Center, Incorporated, Philippine distributor of automotive lubricant Pulsarex, continues to expand its network of partners with the recent signing of Shellane Motor Oil and Champion Motor Oil as its newest accounts. The three have 10 national partnership that will enable Exatech to reach out to more customers in addition to its network of Shellane LPG and Champion Motor Oil dealers. Pulsarex is a non-chlorinated and hydrocarbon free synthetic lubricant that is made of the latest cooling specialist based on all over the world as a leading provider of quality cooling systems. Exatech is also a leading supplier of automotive engine oil and transmission. Pulsarex is a world-class lubricant with superior technology and innovation. Pulsarex Co-of-the-line brand and commercial appliances including refrigerators, air conditioners, garage and door openers, beverage and wine coolers, and microwaves. Pulsarex Products distributor Champion motor oils. Shellane is made by Exatech. Shellane is a quality lubricant that is made of the latest cooling specialist based on all over the world as a leading provider of quality cooling systems. Exatech is also a leading supplier of automotive engine oil and transmission. Pulsarex is a world-class lubricant with superior technology and innovation. Pulsarex Co-of-the-line brand and commercial appliances including refrigerators, air conditioners, garage and door openers, beverage and wine coolers, and microwaves. Pulsarex Products distributor Champion motor oils. Shellane is made by Exatech.

ProductFiles

Sarah Geronimo moving forward

PASSING THROUGH THAT OLD BRIDGE AGE BETWEEN YOUR twenties is an experience that can be both confusing and exhilarating. You feel yourself having to lose a lot of things. That may be difficult to cope with, especially if you don't have your mother, loving and encouraging support system to help you through it. You difficulty holds especially true for many young women. So, aside from the usual "growing up" angst and challenges that they have to meet, they also have to overcome the regular worries and hassles that hold their dusk and how them kept when during their wedding time. With Chairman Mr. Ron Geronimo Pads, that periodic table secret Chairman often of natural comfort and protection, with its soft nothing cover, lush material characters and super ultra-feel gel. I doubt the qualities any gel looks for in a bed buddy. Diamond's features and reliability inspires full-blooded trust and total dependence. This type of trust is critical in the relationship between Chairman and his endorsers. Pads for Geronimo, Sarah has been a Pantaleon Diamond Endorser since before she achieved showbiz. And apparently, as she goes through her transformation from being a teenager to a young adult and evolving into a singer who could command performance she can do anything from acting to hosting to dancing, she never fails to give it her all because she knows that whatever move she makes, Diamond will make sure she's always completely protected.

Life begins when worries end

BEING A HOMEOWNER HAS ITS PRIVILEGES AND THEY MAY be the most gratifying in the life. But becoming a homeowner is not without challenges, especially if you are one of the millions of Filipinos with no insurance. Being out and living for stay come even worries from many years and inconvenience can hinder the joys of being a grandparent. Not you anymore, with the Pantaleon Diamond Designed for maximum comfort and convenience. Shares affordable loans for a better life, continuous motivation, help guards and maintenance personnel package. It also offers maximum attendants and promotions, and has excellent housekeeping and maintenance. Offices and residential condominium units. Dr. P is also available to those within the right to luxury accordances. With Dr. P protection, there's no need to worry. We can go ahead have a good time with your own!

Are you diabetic?

PREGNANT TO BE THE SILENT KILLER, DIABETES IS ONE OF THE world's leading causes of death. It's incurable, and knowing what to be regularly monitored to avoid further complications which may result to cardiovascular disease, stroke, renal failure, blindness, nerve damage, or amputations. Through the years, various herbal medicines have been discovered to regulate the blood sugar level of diabetic patients. One of the most commonly used medicine through the Ayurvedic medical system, a kind of treatment that has been practiced in India for more than five thousand years. Ayurvedic preparations are made from different herbs, each with a special ingredient to fight the root cause and other secondary effects of the disease. One such formulation that is very effective for the control and prevention of diabetes mellitus type 2 is Cogent dha. It contains vinca herbs and these herbs are used to relieve melancholy disorders of the brain, cardiovascular system, liver, and metabolism. The formula has anti-diabetic properties, anti-diabetic potential, and acts as a prophylactic agent against diabetic complications. Together with prescribed medicines, Cogent dha is able to control blood glucose. This herbal preparation comes in tablet form, in blister packs of 30 (Int'l Cogent box. Diabetic patients are recommended to start with two tablets a day (breakfast and dinner) after each meal, while those without diabetes can take it once in the tablet a day. The effects will only be noticeable after 1 to 3 months of non-stop use. It is best complemented by exercise and proper diet.

POPS IS STA. LUCIA'S LATEST CELEBRITY ENDORSER

Real estate giant Sta. Lucia Land recently signed up Pops Fernandez as its latest celebrity endorser. Pictured in a sponsorship with the company's unveiling and marketing collaterals, Pops will also be featured in various radio and TV shows promoting Sta. Lucia Land, and will also invite spectacular performances for various Sta. Lucia events. Pops will also enjoy the company's own affordable "Mall Rental," facilities and commercial lot. Various features. As part of its marketing campaign, Sta. Lucia Land is bringing more convenience to Fort Bonifacio. Rudolf Tee and Cecile Tee, the owners will open two stores in the Middle East and the US. Photo shows (standing from left) Arnold Magtibay, president of NCC Credits; Ed enthusing his and managers of Pops Fernandez, Rolando G. Pantilo, executive vice president of SLLDC; Eduardo B. Tiamzon, president of PMS; Mrs. Ma Luisa Mabilin, VP for finance and administration of PMSC; Lionel T. Magpoc, VP for sales of PMSC; Antonio B. Bolano, VP for treasury of PMSC; (seated, from left) Pops Fernandez and Exequiel Pantilo, president of SLLDC.

MOA FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

Water Efficiency and Resources Management, Inc. recently signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the BOD-TECH for the construction of its new office building and facilities. Shown are (from left) Bernardo D. Pantilo, executive vice president of SLLDC; Eduardo B. Tiamzon, president of PMS; Mrs. Ma Luisa Mabilin, VP for finance and administration of PMSC; Lionel T. Magpoc, VP for sales of PMSC; Antonio B. Bolano, VP for treasury of PMSC; (seated, from left) Pops Fernandez and Exequiel Pantilo, president of SLLDC.

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Investment bank sees peso falling to 48:$1 in Q3

Rebound seen in end of '09

By Doris C. Dumlao

FRENCH INVESTMENT BANK Calyon sees the peso softening to 48 to $1 this quarter but rebounding strongly to 43 by the end of 2009.

Sebastien Barbu, senior economist and strategist at Calyon based in Hong Kong, yesterday said softening times would continue to put the peso under fire but the region's medium-term economic outlook remains attractive given the prospects of commodity prices softening and the western credit crunch possibly ending soon.

In the Philippines, he expects the thoughts of higher inflation to ease its benchmark interest rate by 50 basis points since this quarter to end the year at 6.25 percent, in order to curb sharply rising consumer prices.

The BSP was projected to keep its overnight borrowing rate at a level unchanged for the rest of next year and to start raising rates again in the third quarter to end 2010 with a rate of 7.25 percent.

When inflation is rising, central banks tend to tighten monetary policy—by raising interest rates or by cuts on banks' reserve requirements—to cool down economic and business spending.

Barbu's base case outlook for the Philippines and the region for next year was anchored on two variables—the US financial crisis and oil prices.

"In terms of the global financial crisis, it's going to excess step by step. It's not right everything will go right away, but at least it would be over in the course of second half of this year," he said in an interview at the sidelines of Calyon's market briefing in Ghent.

He said the US Federal Reserve's promotive monetary easing would help the US economy avoid a full-fledged recession and the US government's fiscal stimulus package should support growth this third quarter. He said the US Fed would likely keep its targeted funds rate unchanged at 2 percent and return to a "neutral" rate of 4-4.5 percent by next year.

"On fiscal stimulus, I think the main source of uncertainty of recovery is coming [as] Asian economies continue to stimulate. ...Net inflation is going to come down as oil prices go down to something like $100 per barrel at the end of this year," Barbu said.

"This is a very strong assumption because this means that for Asia, for many net inflation [exiting beginning] for fourth quarters of this year," he said.

Barring geopolitical disturbances particularly to Israel and Iran, Calyon expects global oil prices to further ease to $90 per barrel by mid-next year.

For this year, he said the Philippines would have to contend with a slowdown in domestic economic growth to 4.5 percent from a 31-year high of 7.2 percent last year. Domestic inflation was projected to end the year at 10 percent but this is seen to fall to 4 percent by the end of 2009 to become gently to seen to pick up to 5 percent.

The peso, on the other hand, was projected to end the year at 48 after hitting 46 this quarter.

DEEP IN MY HEART I BELIEVE THAT SEN. Jinggoy Estrada, also JPE, had a bright idea when he said the Supreme Court was wrong.

It was such a smart thought in me, because all of us down here in my barangay had this stupid notion that, just in case the Supreme Court was wrong on something, the next step for us would be to appeal ex-cause all the way to heaven.

My group of believing that the Supreme Court always had the last say on anything that had something to do with the law.

Now we know, thanks to the senatorial of our senators, we do not have to follow all the rulings of the Supreme Court.

We can just disobey any Supreme Court decision that, with all due respect, we believe to be wrong, even if the Supreme Court made the ruling a long, long time ago.

What applies to JPE should only apply to us? Tell you what—I am beginning to miss this country.

...

THAT IMAGE JUST also of JPE, of course, had something to do with the last time in months on our smuggling.

Here he is our Old Iconos at the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Freeport were allegedly into "smuggling" of luxury cars.

Actually, the inspectors for the new came from the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, which reported that the "smuggling" of luxury cars and sports utility vehicles (SUVs) was taking place at first from with abandon.

We all know then, only a few weeks ago, JPE and the foreign business chamber have had a world famous spat over the power sector reform law called Epira.

And so JPE had to step into the "re-smuggling" issue as Pres. Estrada "FE-corrupt."

Our boss, JPE, his boss claiming that "smuggling" could not take place in his territory unless he would allow it. We could sleep soundly, in other words, because in effect JPE was saying that there would never be smuggling in Port Irene. How could such a man like him allow it, right?

Our confusion down here only came about because, based on reports, JPE appointed his son-in-law, a certain James Keeler, to be his "eyes and ears" in the name because whose nothing bad, or at least against the law, could take place without his blessings.

If JPE needed Keeler to, as "proxy" smuggling at Port Irene, how come he did not need other "eyes and ears" in person other cities in JPE country?

It is also hard to understand why the "eyes and ears" of JPE at Port Irene needed to stay 45-hectare lot where the imported used cars were taken overnight from the ships.

Apparently, Keeler could not do any monitoring of our importation unless he owned some property. Or something like that—you know very logical!

AND THEN there was the claim of Keeler that, as JPE's eyes and ears, he made sure that the importers of those used luxury cars paid the correct taxes.

All right, well and good! It's just that we thought that the payment of correct taxes was not really the issue.

For one, upon the recommendation of the Import Assist of Finance, probably with assorted lobbying from Our Inestigo, are compadres here, Lolo at the Palace found to us for having the importation of used cars.

That was Executive Order No. 156, which banned the importation of used motor vehicles (except trucks, buses, special purpose vehicles such as ambulances) all over the country.

Importers of used cars (mainly BMWs and Mercedes Benzes) at the Subic Freeport challenged the presidential order.

Subsequently, the Supreme Court sided with the Gob.

To JPE, the Supreme Court decision was wrong. He said only Congress could lose the importation of certain products.

Confusion here in my barangay arises because we do not know what other things only Congress can do.

Never mind that the legality of ratifying that Congress does—or can do—may also be questioned before the Supreme Court.

Hmm, the Supreme Court was wrong.

...

SECURITY BANK, which is one of the country's most profitable banks with almost 27-percent ROE (return on equity) during first half 2009, it says, is taking on the look for new acquisitions.

Reportedly, Bank of the Philippine Islands (Ayala group) and Banco de Oro (BD group) were looking into a small commercial bank for possible acquisition, which enjoys strong presence in the Chinese community.

My take is that Security Bank is also interested.

And that is rather believable coffee shop chitchat. Security Bank has been posting hefty increases in its ROE for the past five years starting in 2002. The bank also made headway in penetrating the small- and medium-sized businesses, particularly those owned by Chinese-Filipinos.

In other words, it has the money and the reason to go for that small commercial bank up for sale.

Wrong time ago

BREAKTIME

Conrado S. Bernal III

ROUNDUP

PRC Fast ID

PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION (PRC) recently launched "Fast ID," a new service that allows registered professionals to secure their Professional IDs in an hour.

"PRC is always looking for ways to improve our services to the public. Just once ago, we launched a service that allowed applicants to get their IDs within the day. This year, we topped the services of PRC Corp. to develop a system to allow us to give Professional IDs a lot faster," says PRC chair Leonor Rivera.

Fast ID is in response to the clamor for faster releasing of Professional IDs. With hundreds of professionals trooping to PRC daily, the new account view for IDs production had been a cause for concern.

PRC dedicated an exclusive booth for Fast ID, where for an extra fee of P200 on top of the regular licensing fee, professionals can get their new IDs in an hour.

TSM Corp. is a Filipino-owned IT company that provides hardware, software, maintenance, business process outsourcing, systems integration and outsourcing services.

Food supplement from oil

[illegible] FOOD from tropical has introduced in the market a 100-percent natural food supplement called VirginOil, formulated from oil.

Tropikal said the food supplement was a result of years of intensive research and study in the Philippines and in Japan. It said the food supplement has the unsaturated fatty acids Palmitoleic and Docosahexaenoic acid and Eicosapentaenoic acid, which do not solidify at room and body temperatures.

Palmitoleic acid, found only in oils, is known to increase beneficial functions such as strengthening blood vessels and regulating cells. These have also been found to increase the general health, alertness, stamina or endurance, strength, regular bowel movement, regular metabolic function and joint pain relief.

CDM project

REGCOR Biofuels Inc.'s $2.3-megawatt (Mw) biofuel-powered project, currently being constructed in Sta. Cruz, Davao del Sur, was registered under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project.

The registration came over a year after it was endorsed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and other agencies. After it was endorsed by Secretary Jesse Del Barrios to Undersecretary Jasmin Del Barrios Emilia Del Mundo-Ali.

The 100% a market-based flexibility mechanism which allows developed countries with "certified emissions reduction" units to help meet their greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol.

The project's clean energy will reduce GHG emissions by more than 80,000 tCO2e (tons of carbon dioxide equivalent) yearly by displacing energy that would have come from fossil fuel-fired power plants," said Regcor president Rene Rosquito.

Its registration will allow Regcor to sell GHGs in the world carbon market up to 2012.

REGCOR is a wholly owned subsidiary of Manila Power Corp.

BASIC ENERGY GSC SIGNED

Energy Secretary Angelo T. Reyes (center) and Basic Energy president and CEO Oscar L. de Veyra Jr. (right) sign the geothermal service contract that will allow the company to conduct geological, geochemical and geophysical works on a project in Mabini, Batangas. Looking on is Basic Energy vice president for government operations Alberto P. Pinedo (left).

80,000 companies found not paying national taxes

By Michelle V. Rorra

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE SAID about 80,000 companies were not registered with the tax agency and were, therefore, not paying national taxes.

Revenue Commissioner Lilian Hefti said her office discovered this when the Corporate databases of local government units were compared with that of the BIR. The matching revealed that quite a number of businesses were registered with the LGUs were not in the BIR records.

The matching of the taxpayers records was proposed by some LGUs. Treasurers of cities and municipalities earlier said the national government might be losing substantial revenue as some businesses were not registered with the BIR.

LGUs said some businesses were seen in complying only local taxes than national taxes. This is because cities and municipalities are more able to monitor businesses operations in their jurisdiction.

Hefti said the additional number of companies included in the BIR database, through the LGUs Revenue Assistance Project, will allow the Bureau to collect more taxes.

She said the LGU Revenue Assistance Project would be complemented by efforts to intensify the BIR internal cross-check program. It will intensify the "Run After Tax Evaders" (RATE) program by filing cases against tax evaders.

Companies found to be operating without registering with the BIR are expected to be charged under the RATE program. The BIR earlier said, however, that it would focus its efforts more on big-time tax cheats rather than the smaller ones.

Hefti said the LGU Revenue Assistance Project and the RATE program were just some of the eight major programs implemented by the BIR to shore up tax collection. The others were the following: "Project as Reality," third-party information systems, and computerized auditing of tax payers audit.

Under the Project as Reality program, the BIR grants cash prizes to taxpayers who will write in its regular raffles. To join in the raffle, taxpayers should ask for receipt every time they make a purchase. The receipt numbers are the ones raffled off.

Under the third-party information system, the BIR taps other government agencies for information that are relevant to tax audit. An example is the records from the Securities and Exchange Commission, or to the number of existing corporations.

The BIR, which accounts for over 60 percent of the national government's revenues, vowed to collect P945 billion this year.

Earlier, the Department of Finance, the BIR's mother agency, said the BIR was on track to meet its full-year tax collection goal.

In the first half, the BIR said, the BIR collected P360.8 billion, surpassing its target of P329 billion for the six-month period.

The BIR and other government agencies were encouraged to collect more than their official targets due to the rising expenditure requirements of the government, especially for social services programs.

ACI launches condo project in Makati

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

UNDAUNTED BY RISING CONstruction costs and higher borrowing rates, just weeks from ACI Group recently launched a P1.5-billion residential condominium project in upscale Makati City.

The project, One Pacific Place, will be undertaken by ACI residential arm Cirilas Realty Corp.

The 33-story condominium will be put up in Salcedo Village.

It will make available 360 residential units at prices ranging from P1.89 million to P6 million.

ACI Group and Cirilas Realty vice president for public affairs Michael Lozano said construction of the flagship condominium project will start this year. Preselling also started early this year.

Lozano and Carlos Realty are offering flexible payment terms such as zero down payment and an option to pay as low as P18,000 a month on the unit bought.

He also said One Pacific Place would offer energy-saving features to ease the buyers' living expenses, including large windows that allowed natural lighting and ventilation system that would reduce consumption of electricity.

The project will also feature two floors of amenities to support the modern lifestyle of young professionals, businessmen, and families. These include three Wi-Fi-ready lounges, daycare facilities, kiddie pool, state-of-the-art gym and a function hall/private cinema.

ACI Group is the owner of Fun Pacific Manila, a luxury business hotel in Malate, and Adriatico Square, an entertainment complex also in Malate.

One Pacific Manila has been ranked as the country's leading business hotel by the travel-group World Travel awards organization.

Unioil to embark on P90-M expansion

By Abigail L. Ho

INDEPENDENT OIL FIRM United Petroleum Philippines aims to invest around P90 million to P95 million this year for the construction of 40 new retail stations.

Unioil general manager Lando Medina-Cao said two new sites had already been established and were now being prepared for commercial operation.

"One is along Edsa in Caloocan and the other is on Mindanao Avenue in Quezon City). The Caloocan site is already signed up. The Mindanao Avenue site is still in the process of negotiations," he said in an interview.

More sites were being considered in the store, he said, including some in Las Piñas, Makati and Pasay.

For the year, he said Unioil was planning to add six new stations to the existing 33 retailing service stations.

Each of these new stations would cost the company between P20 million and P25 million, he added.

Unioil currently supplies gasoline, diesel and kerosene to both public and private vehicles in its more than 40 stations. It also sells autogas, or liquefied petroleum gas for vehicles, in selected stations in Metro Manila.

The oil firm is also a major supplier of jet fuel to both domestic and international carriers, as well as of bunker fuel and diesel oils to the power and manufacturing sectors.

Through a partnership with Emerald Gold, Unioil uses the company Orbisk International Corp. also distributes Rico Asphalt in the country.

Orbisk's latest undertakings included the supply of asphalt for the construction of the Iloilo International Airport runway through Talisay and the construction of 33 kilometers of roads in the Clark Freeport Expressway in Pampanga through Subaru Corp.

BUSINESS

Gov't spent ₱351.72B to settle first half debt

Debt servicing still came ahead of social services spending

By Michelle V. Rosso

SIXTY-TWO CENTAVOS FOR every peso worth of revenue generated by the government in the first half were spent on servicing debts, according to the Bureau of the Treasury.

Treasury data showed that the government had spent ₱351.72 billion in the first half to pay off maturing obligations—nearly 62 percent of the ₱570 billion in taxes, fees and privatization proceeds it raised during the period.

For June alone, debt service amounted to ₱80.19 billion.

Also, the government again had to resort to borrowing because the funds that remained, after settling part of its obligations, were not enough for it to invest in other expenditure requirements, such as infrastructure and social services, as well as salaries of state workers.

Finance officials admitted that, based on the latest figures, debt service was still eating a huge portion of its revenues like they said the figures also showed marked improvements from the amount spent on debt service in previous years.

Spending for debt service in the first half of the year was 6.3-percent higher than the ₱330.32 billion shelled out in the same period a year ago.

The latest share of debt service to revenues also fell from the 68 percent registered in the first half last year, and from the over 90 percent in the early 2000s.

Of the amount spent in the first half to pay debts, ₱140.97 billion accounted for interest, while the bigger share of ₱210.75 billion was used to settle principal obligations.

This year, the government borrowed ₱268.24 billion from domestic lenders, and ₱193.48 billion from foreign sources.

Although the government is increasingly coming under pressure to spend more on pro-poor programs, due to the rise in poverty incidence, it continues to self-proudly pay its debts, estimated at around ₱3.0 trillion, as they fall due.

Finance officials had said that because the government continued to honor its debt obligations, domestic and international lenders had kept their doors open to the country every time it needed to borrow.

The government had relied heavily on borrowings over the years because tax collection would usually prove insufficient to meet its expenditure requirements.

But according to the Department of Finance, the government has been striving to reduce its budget deficit, hoping to attain a balanced budget by 2010.

Finance officials said that with a balanced budget, the government would be free to reduce its borrowings. This is because the government will only have to borrow to pay off maturing obligations—it need not turn to lenders to secure funds for public programs, projects and operations.

The government has supposed to balance the budget this year. But because of the slowdown in the global economy and high inflation, it was forced to spend more on social services than originally programmed.

The government decided to allow itself to post a cumulative budget deficit of ₱71 billion this year, and to move its zero-deficit goal to 2008.

RICE DEMO FARM

Department of Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap and National Irrigation Administration Administrator Carlos Salazar inspect a field and a sample of rice panicle (inset) at the rice research and demo farm of Sustainable Systems and Irrigated Agriculture in Barangay Salvacion, Bayugan, Agusan Del Sur. The demo farm is used to produce organic fertilizers, apart from inbred rice.

Double-digit remittance growth trend seen to go on

By Doris C. Dumlao

REMITTANCES FROM OFWs and other workers may continue the double-digit growth trend in the next few years, according to New York-based think tank GlobalSource.

"We can reasonably expect remittances to continue growing robustly in the future," GlobalSource said in its latest monthly report. "Our forecast for the annual change in these flows this year is 10 percent, or even higher. Based on recent trends, the rate is unlikely to fall far below the 13.2-percent growth registered in 2007, and may even reach government's expectation of about 14 percent."

The report, written by Filipino economists Romeo Bernardo and Margarita Gonzales, cited several factors that would support the growth in remittances from which, in turn, would help the country post foreign exchange surpluses even in an environment of soaring oil prices and slowing global economy.

For one, the report noted that a geographically diverse pool of overseas workers was serving its purpose, making up for slumps in some areas.

While the US economy had slowed down, for instance, it and other Middle East economies were growing rapidly on account of high oil prices. Thus, the number of deployed workers increased in such destinations as the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and, of late, even Saudi Arabia, already the largest employer of Filipinos worldwide, accounting for almost a fifth of total deployment.

"Together, the three countries employ over a third of the total number of temporary overseas workers, with the region as a whole [West Asia] providing work for nearly half," GlobalSource said.

Also, GlobalSource said many US-based Filipinos were working in areas less vulnerable to a recession, such as healthcare and education.

With official data citing net account only from localities covered through the banking system, the report said the sustained rise in remittances partly reflected better exposure of these funds.

"The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said this was due to the increased presence of commercial banks, as well as local money transfer agents, in countries where Filipinos tend to cluster.

"With a sturdy growth trend in remittances, we are quite optimistic that balances of payments (BOP) can still post a surplus even under severely high world oil prices, and that domestic growth can still be supported by overseas Filipino-funded demand," GlobalSource said.

Each month, Filipinos abroad, now numbering nearly nine million or over a fourth of the labor force, send home about $1 billion, allowing the country to consistently post current account and BOP surpluses.

PETRON
Fuel Success.

NOTICE TO PETRON STOCKHOLDERS

Please be informed that the Annual Stockholders Meeting of Petron Corporation will be held on July 31, 2008 at 9:00 a.m. at the SMX Convention Center, Seashell Drive, Mall of Asia Complex, Pasay City. **Registration will start at 7:00 a.m. and the registration booths will be closed at exactly 8:59 a.m.** The meeting is expected to end at 11:59 a.m.

For your convenience, please bring the stockholders' identification slip and any form of valid identification to facilitate registration.

With reference to the Definitive Information Statement submitted by Petron as a requirement for the Annual Stockholders Meeting, the SEC in its letter dated July 21, 2008 granted the request of Petron for the amendments thereof under the following conditions:

a) An amended Definitive Information Statement shall be filed with the Commission within five (5) days from the conduct of the company's annual stockholders meeting and that relevant portions of the amendment be distributed to the stockholders before the conduct of the election of officers; and

b) An announcement shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation informing Petron's stockholders of the resolution of the Commission granting the company's request and disclosing the presentation that is well understood to finalize the list of nominees for its directors and other material amendments to its Definitive Information Sheet (SEC Form 20-IS).

With the execution today of the purchase of the 40% Aramco interest in Petron by Aldrews Investments Management Limited, a new set of nominees of Aldrews has been submitted to the Office of the Corporate Secretary. The Aldrews nominees will be properly endorsed for election at the Stockholders' Meeting on July 31, 2008.

In compliance with the SEC letter, the amendment to the Definitive Information Statement which contains exclusively of the names and professional background of the Aldrews nominees, will be distributed to the stockholders at the meeting upon registration.

Thank you.

PETRON MANAGEMENT

DA earmarks ₱783M for Mindanao facilities

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture (DA) says it has allocated ₱783 million for the repair and rehabilitation of irrigation facilities in Mindanao, which accounts for over 40 percent of the country's palay output (source).

These restoration and rehabilitation activities are critical, particularly in Mindanao, due to its huge contribution to the country's total palay output.

According to the National Irrigation Administration, the DA has so far spent ₱203 million to restore 41 percent of hundred irrigation facilities, covering some 5,126 hectares of land to be planted to palay this dry-season cropping season.

The DA added that these areas covered by the restored irrigation systems in Mindanao would be planted with hybrid and certified seeds to further increase average yield to 4.5 metric tons per hectare from 4.2 tons for inbred seeds, and to 6.0 tons per hectare from 6 tons, for hybrid seeds.

Carlos Salazar, NIA officer in-charge, said the Southern Philippines Irrigation Sector Project covering Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur and Lanao del Sur; the Talaingod Irrigation Project, and the Bukidnon Irrigation Project Phase II in Bukidnon, are among the government's biggest irrigation development initiatives in Mindanao.

Other projects are the Kabulnan II Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project in Maguindanao, and the Sta. Josefa Irrigation Project in Agusan del Sur, Salazar added.

"These projects will allow for more intensive farming and multiple-crop cropping, paving way to increased farmers' incomes, more jobs and higher living standards for agricultural communities," Salazar said.

For this year, the government targets to repair and rehabilitate irrigation systems covering an area of 142,255 hectares and to construct facilities that can serve 20,353 hectares nationwide.

Currently idle irrigation systems nationwide have rendered irrigable service units 268,000 hectares of rice land, which could have produced at least 28.4 million sacks of rice in one cropping season.

In 2007, rural irrigation service area in the country has reached 1.433 million hectares, which is equivalent to an irrigation development level of 47 percent. Of the total service area, 700,000 hectares are in national systems; 554,000 hectares in communal systems; and 174,000 hectares in private systems.

Irrigation support is among the five critical areas that the DA has been supporting to enable the country to produce 17.5 million tons of palay this year, 16.5 million tons in 2009, and 19.8 million tons in 2010.

LIFESTYLE Wellness

Julie Thelma Suson-San Juan

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Raw food diet

As the body ages, the enzymes dwindle. The loss has to be replenished by eating raw food to feed the cells with nutrients

By Margo C. Enriquez
Contributor

CULINARY ARTIST CHERIE Lou Ignacio was a walking drugstore for most of her life. She suffered from hypertension at 21 years old, had a baby who died in her womb at 23, suffered from arthritis in her 30s, not to mention high cholesterol, and had lived on heavy medication until her 40s. Meanwhile, she established a successful but stressful Quickmelt Enterprises business, went through a rocky relationship and survived it. As if the travails weren't enough, she was diagnosed with kidney stones.

STUFFED PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM with ground avocado-tomato-sea salt topping

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PHILIPPINE Airlines chairman and CEO Lucio C. Tan and his wife, chairman Carmen Tan (center), lead the toast to the new Mabuhay Miles MasterCard, together with Park Villa Real, MasterCard Philippines vice president and country manager; Peter H. Tup, Allied Banking Corporation's executive vice president and retail banking group head; Henry So Up, Philippine Airlines deputy CEO and executive vice president for commercial group; Ireneo Reynaldo A. Pitalang, Allied Banking Corp. president; Jaime J. Bautista, Philippine Airlines president and COO; Fel C. Rana Jr., Allied Banking Corp. first vice president and card center head

PETER Tup, PAL's brilliant Henry So Up analyses

EDALMarasigan, Marnie Ribeiro and Lucie Ocampo flash their Mabuhay Miles World MasterCards

Grand launch of Mabuhay Miles World MasterCard

BARBARA Aragon, PAL's SVP for product loyalty marketing, and Fel Rana, Allied Banking Corp. first VP for credit cards

PNB president Omar Mier

TIME OF INVITING JOSEPH TSENG of the country's most prestigious invitations at the grand launch of Mabuhay Miles World MasterCard co-ins, dahlings, at the NBC Tent.

Welcoming us was Philippine Airlines chairman and chief executive officer Lucio C. Tan and wife Carmen, together with host-host executives from PAL, Allied Banking Corp. and MasterCard and Lucio Tan Group of Companies.

This new Mabuhay Miles World MasterCard gets you closer to free flights aboard PAL with their frequent-flyer point-to-mile conversion, at a super low P58 to 1 mile from Mabuhay Miles, which is translated into similar service class upgrades. Hey, not bad for all the passengers, pahanggas.

With the Mabuhay Miles Platinum MasterCard, you get "an impressive range of benefits like free flights aboard PAL, a waived first-year annual fee and attractive services in more than 210 countries with gateways.

And across when the MasterCard logo is displayed," explained PAL's SVP for marketing, eye-catching beauty and leader Barbara Aragon, to-boot.

Call 811-8811 or 1800-10-811-8811, visit www.mabuhaymilesmastercard.com.

It was a super fun night with airline tickets and hotel accommodations around the world raffled off during the event. Some lucky names were called, but undeniably for them, they had left. Well, you see some, you lose some, di ba?o, pahanggas.

PAUL Yeo, Allied Banking Corp. SVP for credit cards

PAL president Jaime Bautista and Mabuhay Miles million miler Joel Mari Chua

ALLIED Banking Corporation's Teri Tan and Aida Ta

BUTCH Besangco with Bambi Libunao, Security Bank Corp. Bel-Air business manager

MAY photographers at their exhibit in The Travel Club Galleria: Bahaghari, Jake Verona, Sara Black and Mark Medes

MR-MRS Santos, UTC sales and marketing senior director, host Bianca Valerio and Jay Lim, The Travel Club marketing manager

HITLINE Alaiza and Ees Galiardo of Philippine Marketing Associates with Carol Tan Ting, UTC merchandising director

Travel Club's 'Great Escape'

Every jet-setter have a club. And it's called The Travel Club, ate-ed-iment. Recently, a inaugurated a two-attending photo exhibit titled "The Great Escape," dahlings.

Ongoing at The Travel Club's Bellevue store, the exhibit features young but photographers Sara Black, Bahaghari, Mark Medes and Jake Verona.

Also seen at "The Great Escape" opening were Ms Ann Santos, sales and marketing senior director of Unilabs Diagnostic Co., Inc., and Jenny Ty, member of board of directors, Primer Group, dahlings.

"This photo exhibit is meant to inspire The Travel Club's customers, to embark on their own versions of great escapes," explained Ms Ann S.

Tons of stylish travel gear were given away, pahanggas.

Ina's Black, a darling of the fashion world, takes a handful flight with a bit of nostalgia, Bahaghari, on the other hand, documents multifaceted Filipino scenes like life-dying and carabaos.

Medes, meanwhile, shows the charm of traveling by rail. And Jake has his great escapes through a new story, pahanggas.

The Travel Club has the widest range of the world's most trusted and dependable brands of luggage and travel gear.

"The Great Escape" exhibit, dahlings, inaugural season to have their own great escape.

Inspired by the theme pahanggas, and made a great escape by chilling out at home... for exchange.

Alicia Keys returns to Manila

Hey! It's time to groove with the rhythm and blues, and and woo-and when fantastic artist Alicia Keys returns to Manila for a dazzling performance at the SM Mall of Asia Complex on Tuesday, Aug. 5.

Alicia promises a lineup of mesmerizing notes from her latest studio album "As I Am." It features her unique interplay of soul, R&B, hip-hop and ophone melodies, pahanggas.

ALICIA Keys will stage "As I Am" at the open field of SM Mall of Asia.

Catch Alicia Keys at the awesome open field of the SM Mall of Asia. And believe me, pahanggas, this concert experience will be just as illuvvering as her songs and vocals.

Check out Alicia and grab your ticket by calling Ticketworld at 891-9999. For open seating inquiries, call SITY Philippines at 702-USC. Ticket prices are at P5,950, P3,450, P900, P450.

THE TRAVEL Club channel director Maribel Manotoc and Evelyn Tiu

MARIZA Bautista, Security Bank Corporation's area head for southeast metro

SECURITY Bank top executives Asuncion Dy, Maria Claudia and William Wong

GOOD-LOOKING jetsetter Romeo Lee, SBC VP of treasury, with young councilor Jun Jun Binay and Alberto S. Villarosa, SBC president and CEO

JOSE Mari Chan

Security Bank's new branch

There is a new baby born in the mall-anopened Security Bank Corp.'s family. Its latest model branch, Security Bank Bel-Air, pahanggas, at Angelo Street had a tri-o-ver French cocktail affair.

There were excellent wines and superb gourmet specials for their customers and invitees. The invitees were delighted by the Gumbi cooking of the hard-to-match Cibo, which prepared gastronomic treats such as canapés and teas of cheese, while listening to an eight-piece string ensemble.

World-class entertainment was also provided by prominent businessman and brilliant singer and composer Jose Mari Chan, no less.

On the other hand, French artist Michel Herbert exhibited his paintings in a mini art show.

Beaming with pride was Rina Peñaloza, corporate communications SVP.

"This marks the start of a series of special events that Security Bank Bel-Air clients can look forward to," she said.

With happenings like this, you can be sure clients will be finding up for Security Bank's 5-class service, pahanggas.

JOSE Mari Chan

Nature spirits help preserve the environment

SUPPOSE THAT OUT OF UNDUE FUN or personal pleasure somebody starts cutting up or destroying your house, your wealth (you feel insured him)? You would most likely be so angry that you would want to hunt him alive! And your emotion would be quite understandable, wouldn't it?

But suppose it is the dwelling place or house of an invisible little creature like the mining lobito or gremio? Or a man destroys and the creatures living there realizes by making him sick, why do some think that's not fair to man?

"Well," some might argue, "because in the first instance, you can see the house you are destroying and you have no right to do that, whereas in the case of these elemental creatures or nature spirits, such as elves and gnomes, they are invisible to us. That's the difference."

On the contrary, I think there's no essential difference between these two incidents, only the dimensions involved are different.

Even if we do not see these creatures, we still need to respect nature and its inhabitants. Simple ethics will tell us that it's wrong to destroy our natural environment just for our own benefit or fun. It does not matter that we do not see who is living there. We should not assume we are not doing any harm to any creature.

That's the big problem with modern urbanized man. He has lost touch with nature and his role in preserving his natural environment. These elemental creatures, on the other hand, help preserve ecological balance. They realize the soil fertile, the waters abundant with life and the air clean. They are the protectors of our natural treasures and resources.

"But we get here first. So, if we want to clear the land of trees and vegetation to build, say a golf course or subdivision, we have the right to do so. We owned it before they did."

Excuse me! You are dead wrong! Find instead the elemental creatures ahead of man, and therefore they are the first owners of the land. Man came much later in the order of creation. So man has no right to say he owned it first.

If we do not respect the elementals' territory, if we destroy their natural habitat, they will retaliate against us. I know a former chief executive of a large bank who destroyed a mound of earth thinking it was just termites' nest.

The very next day he developed raging and fully awake scare that no-doc-monologue could cure. Fortunately, during a session in Pangasinan where he is from, his grandmother saw him and knew he had angered the little creatures. She prescribed that he make an offering to them and ask forgiveness. He was told also to bring to the place he had destroyed and what to say. Within 24 hours after doing what his grandmother told him, he came out clear up. Now he is a firm believer in nature spirits and will not just destroy natural things without proper permission.

So, before starting down a tree, clearing a large abandoned building, or relieving man's self behind a tree, one should ask first the permission of the spirits that may be residing there. Be nice still, consult a good club expert or psychic or albularyo before doing any of the above things, for your own safety and protection.

Rational explanation for fallen tree standing up

Remember the story I wrote last week concerning an uprooted and fallen mango tree in Rizal, City that explained itself standing the night and was seen standing up the next morning by its owners? I theorized that a ghost elemental and invisible being called Isagre must have done that.

Not necessarily, wrote reader Sally Young Jr. of Cebu. He said there's a natural explanation for this because a similar thing happened to him. During a storm, all the trees in their place were uprooted. There was a very big and old coconut tree that fell and it was blocking their way out. So he decided to cut the leaves and half of the main trunk. Subsequent, he exited by the side of the tree. After only a few minutes, he was shocked to see that about half of the trunk suddenly rose up on its own and replace itself!

He said the explanation is this: The root of the tree is still alive and it was forcibly pulled up when the tree fell. "The root of a tree is like soldier that was wounded. When you cut the leaves and smaller branches, the remaining tree became much lighter and the root was able to pull the tree back in place with a loud thud."

He further explained, "The normal ratio between the weight of a tree's roots and its leaves and branches is the same." So when the branches are cut, the remaining root can then pull the tree upward again."

Sounds logical enough to me, but then how can one explain the unusual flash of lights that accompanied the incident in Rizal City? The mystery deepens!

INNER AWARENESS
Jaime T. Licauco

Note: The next Inner Mind Development seminar will be held Aug. 2-3, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., and Saturday, Karma & Reincarnation will be held Aug. 30, 2-7 p.m., at Rm. 308 Price Plaza I Cond., 306 Legaspi St., Quiapo, Manila. Interested parties may call 8307241, 09209666 or fax 09 5569. E-mail: innerawareness_2007@yahoo.com.ph.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arnache

Photos by Alex Van Aragon using PAL Photo Solutions

RHETT Eala for Adidas

LULU Tan-Gan for Fila

3 designers show the versatility of sportswear

By Fran Kangleon

"HOW DO YOU MAGNUM-making it?"

The unexpected question elicited guffaws and chuckles from everyone in the room. It was veteran fashion designer Rhett Eala, apparently eager to be groomed like a model for the day's photo shoot.

Smartly dressed in collared shirt, trousers and Adidas sandals, the RTR prince already looked primed for the camera.

Eala teams up with Adidas to create an activewear collection for Fitness Fashion, Inquirer Lifestyle's maiden runway project.

"The show is a great idea because it presents the designers' other facets," he said. "Fitness Fashion shows you don't just design bridal gowns and cocktail dresses but that you can also design other things. It shows... versatility."

Indeed, Eala has proven he doesn't lack in that department. With a career that spans nearly two decades, he has established himself as a designer of elegant cocktail and evening wear as well as casual and fitness apparel.

As creative director of Collections CL, Eala helped the homegrown label maintain youthful appeal while attracting a bigger market with a good mix of casual but fashion-forward garments.

His "Fashionalista" line, which has become very popular, features the Philippine map as fashion statement. Embroidered or silkscreened in vivid, zesty or metallic colors, the map creates that fashionably nationalistic look on denims, tees, collared shirts and shorts.

For Fitness Fashion, expect Eala to ditch out basic and scream in comfortable designs and pieces from the fashionalista line, all in neutral shades.

"Visually, it's a feather approach," he said. "Designers usually like to mix colors but this time I want it very monochromatic... Everything matches."

Louis Claparols

At the fashion shoot, Louis Claparols often huddled with the other younger designers for snapshots—not of the models wearing their Fitness Fashion outfits but of themselves.

He had the perfect reason to keep "document" being on the project. It is his first shoot with the Fashion Designers' Council of the Philippines.

"I'm the only junior designer on this show, so it's really exciting for me," shared Claparols. "I'm also confidence and... sportswear is something I really love doing."

Claparols officially started designing in 2003, when he was featured in Preview magazine. He had worked on cutie-flecked jeans and other items which were the rage at the time.

The junior designer had ventured into activewear since his sports-inspired collection debuted at last year's Fashion Week.

Paired up with Speedo's Spa Line for Inquirer Lifestyle's fashion show, Claparols described his collection "edgy, 'Star Wars'-inspired, futuristic black-and-white sequences."

The fitness buff, who attends yoga and pump-aerobics classes, actually has his new designs with people who have an active lifestyle because of the fabric ("lots of power") and look ("very sporty") of the clothes.

"I chose Louis Claps as my muse for the collection because she's a triathlete, the embodiment of a woman with an active lifestyle," said Claparols.

While he worries about being

LOUIS Claparols for Speedo

Photography
Dr. Marlon Pesio
and Boy Marasin
Stylings editor
Apples Mendiz-Sadhwani
Makeup
L'Oreal Paris
Hair gallery Candice (Ranch Ela Salon
Pauline Mulit, Daniel Zapata
Scents by (Angelo Falcon/Watsons
Professional), and Raymund Ba
(L'Oreal Technical Artist, other L'Oreal
Professionals)
Models from and Elmil of Professional
Models Association of the Philippines
and Elmeda
Shot on location
at Rizal Memorial Stadium

known in sportswear design sounding the young maverick dreams of having a shot at conflicting tennis star Rafael Nadal and football sensation David Beckham.

Lulu Tan-Gan

Unlike Eala and Claparols, this is the first time the Queen of Resto ventures into activewear...and she seemingly has come prepared.

Donning an all-white ensemble for the photo shoot, Lulu Tan-Gan gaily dropped beside the model who wore her fashion collaboration with Fila (on a tee).

By incorporating her items with Fila sportswear, the designer entrepreneur has created what she calls "athleisure," clothes one can change into after sports or exercise sessions.

"The fashion show is an avenue for designers to venture into a new kind of subject and with a new purpose," Tan-Gan said. "My objective is to show the versatility of sportswear and how it could be transformed into daily fashion."

Unlike a lot of the trendy apparel these days, however, Tan-Gan's Fitness Fashion collection has more to do with the lifestyle of those who will wear the clothes than with their bodytype.

"It is relevant fashion, and now is probably the right time to introduce it as possible investment for women who are... busy with their careers but would like to find time for sports, and for those who are physically active but need to blend their sportswear with alternative pieces to create fashionable looks," Tan-Gan explained.

The designer discovered it was a practical move to mix activewear in her everyday wardrobe. Not only does Tan-Gan wear sporty outfits to work, at the start of the year she also achieved her longtime resolution to slip into shoes for actual physical activities such as speed walking, running and gym exercises.

The Inquirer Lifestyle Fitness Fashion is sponsored by Samsung, HSBC, The Peninsula Manila, Equling, Speedo, Puma, Fila, Bench, Nike Golf, Marks & Spencer, Adidas, Sight, Debon, Punch and 2XU.

Fruits can lessen your sugar craving

YOU CANNOT POSSIBLY overstate your hunger if you're on a diet. So here's how it should be managed.

1. Eat as often as you can. Studies have proven the effectiveness of several small meals as against feasting over large quantities all day long. Bet romantic food Gods is Kind to your body—vegetables, fruits, salads, lean meats/fish, nuts.

2. Do not eat carbohydrates but take high fiber such as brown rice, multigrain breads or pasta.

3. Somehow your day if you must but keep it to a minimum. Don't eat it all by your lonesome. Solo eaters tend to binge on comfort especially when depressed. If you must give in to a sugar craving, try to have a piece of fresh fruit. Trust me, the fruit will cool your sugar craving by half.

4. Ration your wine glasses and tone to life and love with your friends but load up on water first. This ought to antidote the acidity of alcohol and assimilate it somewhat in your stomach (if you have to drink, that is).

our small morsels of food is becareful servings. Or, have a ball meal before drinking, by the way, the combination of drinking and alcohol is lethal.

5. Should you attend a lot of social functions, try to push the bread plate away from you. Even if you are experiencing hunger pangs, sniffing yourself with bread isn't the answer. It will only raise your blood-sugar levels. Instead, drink water with a few drops of lemon in it. Its alkaline combination will calm your stomach acids long enough to remove your discomfort.

6. Stay away from snacks while smoking for dinner or for served. Peanuts and chips are high in fat.

7. While at a social event/meeting or social occasion, contribute to the conversation. People who converse over a meal tend to eat less.

8. Eat your meal as soon as it is cooked. Freshly cooked food is better than day-old food for its nutrients are still intact. In fact, half-cooked veggies are more nutritious in this state.

9. Vegetable juices need to be drunk within 10 minutes of preparation in order to beat the deadline set by enzymes. In short, the longer it is exposed to the air, the more its nutrients are destroyed.

Keep smiling

The more positive and hopeful you are, the more alkaline your well-being. And the more alkaline means the less acidic you are. Alkaline feelings like love and serenity can boost your immune system as opposed to anger and anxiety.

Affirm now: Claim for yourself a harvest of good things in life. You deserve only the best, not the worst. "The love of life is mine now and always."

Love and light!

Raw food diet

Front page C1

Not wanting to have them blamed, Ignacio decided to take the natural route by checking in the white-floor and refined sugar for a healthy diet of brown bread and green leafy vegetables. Eventually she was a naturopath who put her on a raw food diet. In three days, she was liberated from all her medications. Then she went on a detoxification program for another 10 days, eating salads, fresh fruits, coconut juice, ruber leaves, bitter gourd and radish. She lost three pounds on the first day. Then as the end of her program, she lost 18 pounds. "I feel weight without looking haggard," she says.

Then she decided to reinvent herself at midlife as a raw food chef. She sold her restaurants business and decided to pursue an alternative lifestyle. "I was managing 200 employees. I was just too glad to let go," says Ignacio.

Healthy lifestyle

Two years ago, Ignacio unveiled in raw food cuisine under one of the world's most prominent experts on healthy lifestyle, Hilton Calow in Massachusetts. Thousands of people worldwide have benefited from her book "Living on Live Food" and her raw food diet wherein many have experienced dramatic and permanent weight loss and healed themselves of ailments such as diabetes, migraines, joint pains, high cholesterol, hypoglycemia, allergies, depression, gas and bloating, skin diseases, chronic fatigue and tumors.

The raw food diet espouses uncooked produce, nuts, seeds and sprouts, seaweeds, and cold-pressed olive oil. The principle is that cooking destroys most of the nutrients in foods. Enzymes are needed for body functions. As the body ages, so the enzymes dwindle. The less has to be produced by eating raw food to feed the cells with nutrition. Cooking makes it more difficult for the body to digest the food and assimilate them. When overcooked, the food accumulates and becomes toxins, resulting to diseases.

The body becomes acidic when it takes meat, refined sugar, flours and pasta, candy, alcohol and foods with preservatives. An acidic body results in rashes, allergy, chest pains, sinusitis, migraine headache, constipation and a myriad sicknesses. A raw food diet can put the body back in balance.

The raw food diet eschews cooked fats that often lead to heart disease, cancer risks and obesity. Cooked fats clog up the arteries and get stored in the body resulting in weight gain. Raw plant fats such as avocados, coconuts, seeds and nuts contain antioxidants. They don't make the body heavy because they contain enzymes lipase which helps in digesting fats. Cooking has cost the lipase and other important nutrients.

A liver-cleansing program is prepared by Dr. Sandra Cabot complements the raw food lifestyle. The liver is a vital organ in the body that has a major influence in the other systems. The author of "The Liver Cleansing Diet," Cabot observed that one in every three persons has a dysfunctional liver which, in turn, can cause other problems. A sluggish liver will still affect the immune system and energy levels. Conventional and over-the-counter medicine may ease the symptoms but not get into the root cause of the problem. Invariably, the symptoms return and the intake of more medicines or customary medications and treatments supplements increases.

Green smoothies

Pushing 50, Ignacio looks 30 years younger, having lost more than 20 pounds. She starts the day with two glasses of green smoothies made from 40 percent green vegetables and 60 percent bananas, coconut juice, flax seed oil, Vitamin C and virgin coconut oil. Raw food expert Victoria Boutenko explains that taking two or three cups a day provides the body with all the energy and nutritional requirements. These could be combinations of mango and parsley; banana and spinach; or kiwi, banana and spinach.

ASIAN SALAD, a combination of mixed greens, sweet pineapple, strawberries, coconut meat, cucumber, tomato, sugarbeets and celery. The dressing consists of extra virgin olive oil, lemon juice and liquid aminos seasoning.

HICK SALMON, ground salmon with large scallions and red bell pepper wrapped in romaine lettuce and nori, are eaten like spring rolls.

Beware mom. Ignacio drinks juice made from fruits or celery and cucumber. She has a big salad for lunch with flax seed oil. For dinner, she favors fresh fruits and juices.

Ignacio prefers to eat her meals by 6 p.m. so she can sleep at 8 p.m. "The liver functions actively from 10 p.m. to 2 am. That's the time it purifies the blood and gets rid of the body's toxins," she says.

Comparing raw food cuisine with conventional culinary art, she says the latter is more sensational, what with all the garnishes, heavy fats from dairy and oils, and the prompt onset in the gustatory experience rather than the health benefits.

"All you need is a blender or a food processor if you want to splurge, you can get a dehydrator to make the pastas, pizzas and breads from nuts and vegetables. I don't worry about oils flying out of the pan or burns from the gas range. I can swim anytime because I don't cook in front of a hot stove that will melt it," she says.

With the spiraling costs of oil and its effects on hypertension, the raw food diet is the way to go.

Online Ignacio offers raw food diet classes and detoxification programs. Cell: 0917.1121, 4895529 or 0915.2959560. Loomel or Pan Pacific Condominium, Doña Julia Vargas Ave., Ortigas, Pasig City.

Caregiving for loved ones with cancer

THESE BASIC TIPS MAY HELP YOUR loved or loved one with cancer maintain a healthy diet. Consulting with a medical professional can also give you a better insight on caring for your loved one.

- Offer smaller meals more frequently.
- Try to serve the most nutritious of the person's favorite foods.
- Add milk powder to soups, puddings, casseroles and milkshake-type drinks.
- Add cheese or olive oil or butter/margarine to soups, vegetables, rice or eggs.
- Substitute high calorie, high protein food and drink for no-calorie or low-calorie foods.
- Instead of tea and coffee for breakfast or snacks, offer milk with bread and butter or cooked cereal with milk or cream and fruit, or sliced cheese and crackers.
- For desserts or snacks, serve ice cream or custards topped with sauces or fruit, or milkshake with ice cream and fresh fruits.

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Jollitown get-together

THE JOLLIBEE KIDS CLUB (JKC) INVITES ITS MEMBERS AND their families to a whole day of fun at the Jollitown Grand Get-Together on Aug. 2, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., at the World Trade Center in Pasay City. Guests will get to walk the streets of Jollitown and hang out with Jollibee and his friends Hetty, Yum, Twirlie and Hopo. Fun activities include Balloon Twisting, Story Telling and Basketball Hoops. Visit the nearest Jollibee outlet for details.

KID FIT

'Miss Saigon' star Joanna Ampil begins rehearsals for 'West Side Story'/ D5

JOANNA Ampil and Christian Bautista

Pinky Webb, Edu cozy in Vegas

IT'S AN OPEN SECRET THAT EDU MANzano and Pinky Webb are a couple. They were reportedly like honeymooners in Vegas recently. No hasty wedding, though. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas? Not when you're as famous as Edu and Pinky.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

Unidentified

Angel Locsin was spotted in Pansi on a Monday with an unidentified date. Hubbies of the last train that Gel and the members let guy were quite irked. I informed her manager Becky Aguila about it via text but there's no word from her yet. After all the intrigues unduly hurled at Gel, she deserves to leave her "love out from drama" list, tama't tips for romance?

Party girl

Date at Fiesta, Phenomela Bautista was dancing playfully with Mike Nakamura (no, el Ben Alonzo!). He seemed rather coy as Phoem was doing her thing. Phoem's BF quipped: It's Gina's mood out, worry A party girl like Phoem just has her own way of uplifting things up with good dose fun.

Guess who

Guess who this celebrity ex-GF of a handsome actor is. Her alta-minded friends claim that she keeps parting those lay people down. She keeps blabbering about how lucky her ex is. Why was she with him to begin with? Is her disdain for those his folk a delayed reaction or a times after thought?

Intimate dinner

Gwen Montanez will have an advanced birthday dinner on Wednesday at his note-thirlatters. It's gonna be an intimate get-together with his closest cheems. Bidoy's not one who goes for lavish parties. Is he reserving his coast-birthday for an even more intimate celebration with his other half?

Heard that she was supposed to be a surprise guest in "Singing Bee" for Bidoy's pre-taped birthday show but she backed out at the last minute.

Will they finally go all their reunited sweetheart-dems? An olden, when Bidoy and a stronger marriage?

Like robots

"It's like those days are like robots na," Louie Biendin-Ramirez. "There are just too many of them. Too much space and time for their per-

PAGE 2 >>

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1 FLOOD
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5 MAMMA MIA!
6 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
7 BANK JOB
8 PROM NIGHT

NOVALICHES

1 THE DARK KNIGHT
2 BANK JOB
3 PROM NIGHT
4 MEET DAVE
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1 LOST in BBUNGZOHAN Sneak Preview
2 MEET DAVE
3 THE DARK KNIGHT
4 PROM NIGHT

IMUS

1 MEET DAVE
2 BANK JOB
3 THE DARK KNIGHT
4 PROM NIGHT
5 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN Sneak Preview

ANGELES

1 DARK KNIGHT / ZOHAN Sneak Preview
2 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
3 PROM NIGHT
4 WARLORDS

STARMILLS

1 MAMMA MIA!
2 WARLORDS
3 YOU DON'T MESS with the ZOHAN
4 PROM NIGHT
5 THE DARK KNIGHT
6 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH

BACOLOD

1 THE DARK KNIGHT
2 WARLORDS
3 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
4 PROM NIGHT
5 MAMMA MIA!
6 SA PAGDAPO ng MARIPOSA

ILOILO

1 THE DARK KNIGHT
2 MEET DAVE
3 PROM NIGHT
4 MAMMA MIA!
5 JOURNEY to the CENTER of the EARTH
6 WARLORDS

DID YOU KNOW...

Claudine & Judal

IN SPITE OF THE HYPE AND HOOPLA, Claudine Barretto's next movie isn't with ex-girl Lorna. It's with screen rival Judy Ann Santos who has signed to do Basic, reportedly finalized in a meeting with MDA CEO Boy Isaac Gabby Lopez. Judal, however, declined to comment with Dida Pascual sources).

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

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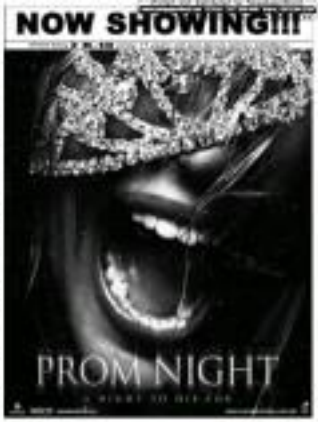
Schedules Subject To Change Without Prior Notice



AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 MEET DAVE	2 THE DARK KNIGHT	3 FROM NIGHT	4 THE BANK JOB			
GLORIETTA 4	1 MEET DAVE	2 FROM NIGHT	3 THE DARK KNIGHT				
GREENBELT 1	4 MAMMA MIA	5 THE FLOOD	6 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	7 THE BANK JOB			
GREENBELT 3	1 MEET DAVE	2 THE DARK KNIGHT					
	1 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	2 THE DARK KNIGHT					
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	3 MAMMA MIA	4 THE BANK JOB	5 MEET DAVE				
	1 THE DARK KNIGHT	2 MEET DAVE					
AYALA CENTER CEBU	3 FROM NIGHT	4 THE BANK JOB	5 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN				
MARKET! MARKET!	1 THE DARK KNIGHT	2 MEET DAVE	3 FROM NIGHT	4 THE BANK JOB			
	1 THE DARK KNIGHT	2 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN					
	3 THE BANK JOB	4 FROM NIGHT	5 MEET DAVE				
TRINOMA	1 THE FLOOD	2 MAMMA MIA	3 FROM NIGHT	4 THE BANK JOB			
	5 MEET DAVE	6 YOU DON'T MESS WITH THE ZOHAN	7? THE DARK KNIGHT				

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — PHILIPPINE RETAILERS ASSOCIATION JOB FAIR
July 30-31 · Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — CITIBANK
July 30-31 · Greenbelt 1 Lobby

Alabang Town Center — Rebirth - Gary V. Live!
July 26 · 8pm · Activity Center

Ayala Center Cebu — ABA INDOAF TOURNAMENT
July 22-26 · Activity Center

Market! Market! — LAGUNA EXPO 2008
July 27-31 · Activity Center

Christopher's — BRIDAL: The perfect spot for veterans, engagees & anyone needy is now accepting bookings for their Aug-Sept 2008 For inquiries & bookings, call 757-7282 or 757-7283

Ayala Museum — Avail some Selected Packages from the BPI Collection on view until Aug 31 Conservatories with Art Museum Entrance or Jan 19, 1:00 am For details, call 757-8088 or 757-7141 to 43 local 8541 visit www.ayalamuseum.org

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Penetrapan Blood Tea exhibit
July 11-Aug. 6 · Level 1 exhibit area (near Silk Bake)

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BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

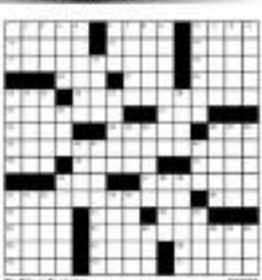
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LUISA GARCELLANO

LOVEHUNTS BY ELIZABETH HONRADO

KIKO MACHINE BY MARK ABRERA

SEN BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Edgar Pastrana
Digitan, MA

7/29/08

Monday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

	3		9				7	
	4	6				9	1	
			7	3	6			
		9		2		5		7
		8				2		
6		2		4		1		
			8	9	3			
	8	3				7	2	
	9				1		8	

Difficulty Level ★★

7/29

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

3	1	7	5	9	4	6	2	8
2	8	5	7	1	6	4	9	3
4	6	9	8	3	2	5	1	7
9	4	2	3	6	1	7	8	5
8	7	3	2	5	9	1	4	6
1	5	6	4	8	7	2	3	9
7	3	1	9	4	5	8	6	2
5	2	4	6	7	3	9	6	1
6	9	8	1	2	5	3	7	4

Protest music is here to stay

PROTEST MUSIC WILL NEVER GO out of style. But some of it fester because the statements get too outdone.

"Wapa-Rapa" ft. Typhoo by Eraserheadz" has found the right mix of interesting music to go with the metaphor subject. Produced by the WOO Centre for Environmental Concerns-Philippines, the CD is the product of a songwriting workshop supervised by veteran protest musicians Bert Dungca to budding composers.

The songs tackle the exploitation of [illegible] resources, but rise beyond the usual of preachy-ness. They sound good, too.

Some are even radio-friendly. Cesar Montano's "Tubig ng Buhay" [illegible] about the lack of water issues out with a vibrant reggae treatment from Gilbert Imlach. Bangon ka "Hindi na Ligtas," sung by Sass Dagooon, could be a hit.

Victor Ocampo's "Lipas," arranged and recorded by The Jerks, is the classic protest song, though, powered by Hilary Ashton's stinging guitar riffs and Chiddy Parish's howling vocals. Ach-ooohs against government protecting foreign interests, it's made more effective by its [illegible] refrain: "Do not sit the songs are no less engaging, with Bayang Barrios, Gerdo Chua, Dicon Tiffo, Mark Gallangco, Lolita Carbon and the Pinoyrama 'E Rollers & Ben Mows.

Ogie's take

Ogie Alcasid calls his latest album, "Great Filipino Song Book" Underrated.

The term — apparently a takeoff from "The Great American Songbook," which is how Sinatra refer to the wealth of Broadway, Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley music recorded from the 1920s till the late '50s — could be an overstatement.

But Alcasid's intention is simply to pay tribute to the country's modern classics — in that case, some of the songs from the golden age of Filipino pop in the '70s.

Some of his choices were originally recorded by women (Zsa Zsa Padilla's "Kahit Ka," for example, and Leah Navarro's "Kailangan Kita"). But he reinterprets them with seamless and elegance. The best tracks are "Sana Bukas" (first sung by Pilita Corrales), "Sino Ako" (Basil Valdez) and "Parang Tanahan" (Imee Marcos).

There -expecting sweeping arrangements will find something amiss. The whole album is spare — just guitar tracks accompanying Alcasid's vocals. But the result makes up for what only interest — the singer sounds very inspired.

Rodrigo Cornejo

Oh, to sing 'til she's old and gray

By Rachelle Cornejo
Photos by Rudy Espiritu

JOANNA AMIE SAYS she wants to keep on singing till she's old and gray.

The 33-year-old musical theater actor, whose major stage debut was the lead role of Kim in the second London production of "Miss Saigon" in 1993, is no stranger to the limelight. She starred in Lerner & Loewe's "My Fair Lady" and Stephen Sondheim's "West Side Story" Joanna (alternating with Kaycee) and Christian Bautista play star-crossed lovers in the production of Stages, a group headed by Audie Gemora, Himig Lunduyan and Fides Cuyugan-Asensio.

'Romeo and Juliet'

Joanna understands why "West Side Story" was lauded as a ground-breaking musical when it first opened on Broadway in 1957. "The story is tragic and based on Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet," she says. "What it played on Broadway, the mood was unusual — with a dance opening. It's 'West Side' was like a first — people didn't know how to take it."

Although it earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Musical, "West Side Story" was edged out by "Music Man." Joanna says it's "Music Man" almost a cute, mute video poem as a boys' band! Frankly, but described as "rooted in [the] serious and music tradition."

Even if it had to settle for a Best Choreography award, "West Side Story" ran for 732 performances in big advertisement in the '50s, segued on even longer-running London production, a number of revivals and international success, and sponsored an [illegible] award-winning 1961 cinema film of the same title.

Perfect musical

It has also been staged a number of times in the Philippines.

"I've seen the [illegible] and a 1997 production in London," Joanna said. "I fell in love with the story; it's my it's kind of like the perfect musical. Every song dances and scene propels what's gonna happen next. That's what makes it so good."

CHRISTIAN Bautista gets down with a laptop during rehearsal breaks.

On July 31, Joanna is going to from London — where she's been based for the past 16 years — to start rehearsals for the latest production.

She learned about it through an ad on the Internet. When she found out that Stages was producing it, she got excited. "I got in touch with Audie, who's a good friend of mine," Joanna recalled. "I asked if he was still looking for someone to play Maria because I'm very interested. Audie was thrilled. The only problem was here I would audition because I was still in London." Joanna and Audie devised a way for her to rescue if she could fail the top notch.

A soprano song

"I told Audie an MP3 of me singing 'Think of Me,' a soprano song from 'Phantom of the Opera' — totally different from here I usually sing," Joanna recounted. "So Miss Saigon I sing 'belty' songs, but so Maria I have to sing in a classical style. He liked it."

Joanna said the only apprehension Audie had was whether she and Christian would have the right chemistry.

"I told Audie that Christian watched 'La Bibi' when I was doing it last year in London and that I had a snapshot with him. I sent Audie the photo and he said, 'Okay, then you go.'"

Like real lovers

At the rehearsals last Saturday afternoon in a dance studio in Fort Acres, Joanna Maneja was busy trying out different sides of doing a confrontation scene between the warring gangs Jets and Sharks.

Christian and Joanna patiently sat in the stage. He was stressing something on a laptop, and she was stretching her hips. Then the shout up and, and for a few minutes, joined some ladies in the cast to rehearse a ballet dance scene.

When it was time to start their dressing scene, Christian and Joanna played it out like real lovers.

Joanna has become very comfortable playing different roles — from Kim in "Miss Saigon" to Mary Magdalene in "Jesus Christ Superstar" to The Princess in "Aladdin" to Eponine and Fantine in "Les Miserables" and Shiloh Franklin in "Rent."

She laughed as she recalled going to the audition for "Miss Saigon" at the PICC and being about her age. "My mom even supported to be accepted. I was 17 and looked 12... I was quite delusional and naïve! I was not a singer. I think I'm closer to Nicholas Hytner, not the part of Kim in my temperament of what I was really getting into. I didn't know how provocative it was."

Joanna's parents had fully supported her decision to become a singer, so early on age 6.

Born for love

"Singing is my passion. It's my life. I wouldn't do it with or without pay. I'd do it on the streets if I had to," she said. "It doesn't matter if I'm on tour or where I'm on the audience to get in touch with their emotions. It's very lucky to have that privilege. I want to keep doing that, even when I'm old and gray and nobody wants to hear me."

(The musical opens Sept. 5 and runs till Oct. 12 at the Meralco Theater in Pasig.)

MARIA'S songs are in the "classical" style, she says.

DAWN Magdangal, left, does his part. At right, Joanna and cast mates at the bar.

Did You Know...

New MTV programs

MTV PHILIPPINES introduces four new programs on the music channel.

"Celebrity Pop Supreme" features celeb-hosting, picking and performing top songs every week with the help of producers and rappers. Airing Tuesdays, 9 p.m.

"Newport Shelter" documents the lives of wealthy teens in Newport Beach, California. Airs Thursdays, 9 p.m.

"Bionic 401" is a journey through the dazzling world of ballet, with mesmerizing routines swept into visual life by hi-tech movie. Airs Saturdays, 9 p.m.

"The 16th Season 2" is a reality series documenting the life of Lauren Conrad and her friends after leaving her California home. Airs Fridays, 9 p.m.

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